



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



DFAT COUNTRY INFORMATION REPORT MYANMAR

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ACRONYMS

AA	Arakan Army
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
BGP	Border Guard Police
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
CSC	Citizenship Scrutiny Card
DPMNS	Democratic Party for Myanmar New Society
CTFMR	Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (UN body mandated to monitor and report on grave violations committed against children in times of armed conflict)
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
ICNV	Identity Card for National Verification
KHRG	Karen Human Rights Group
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army
KNU	Karen National Union
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
MNHRC	Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NLD	National League for Democracy
NRC	National Registration Card
NUG	National Unity Government
NVC	National Verification Card
PDF	People's Defence Force (armed wing of the NUG, comprising many armed groups)
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
TRC	Temporary Registration Card
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
UWSA	United Wa State Army
VPN	Virtual Private Network

GLOSSARY

<i>Ma Ba Tha</i>	Burmese acronym for the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, an organisation led by ultra-nationalist Buddhist monks
<i>Madrassa</i>	Muslim school, college, or university that is often part of a mosque
<i>Pyidaungsu Hluttaw</i>	National parliament
<i>Pyu Saw Htee</i>	Regime-aligned militias funded, trained and armed by the military and its proxies to counter PDFs
Tatmadaw	Myanmar military

Terms used in this report

high risk	DFAT is aware of a strong pattern of incidents
moderate risk	DFAT is aware of sufficient incidents to suggest a pattern of behaviour
low risk	DFAT is aware of incidents but has insufficient evidence to conclude they form a pattern

official discrimination

1. legal or regulatory measures applying to a particular group that impede access to state protection or services that are available to other sections of the population (examples might include but are not limited to difficulties in obtaining personal registrations or identity papers, difficulties in having papers recognised, arbitrary arrest and detention)
2. behaviour by state employees towards a particular group that impedes access to state protection or services otherwise available, including by failure to implement legislative or administrative measures

societal discrimination

1. behaviour by members of society (including family members, employers or service providers) that impedes access by a particular group to goods or services normally available to other sections of society (examples could include but are not limited to refusal to rent property, refusal to sell goods or services, or employment discrimination)
2. ostracism or exclusion by members of society (including family, acquaintances, employers, colleagues or service providers)

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has prepared this Country Information Report for protection status determination purposes only. It provides DFAT's best judgement and assessment at time of writing and is distinct from Australian government policy with respect to Myanmar.

1.2 The report provides a general, rather than an exhaustive, country overview. It has been prepared with regard to the current caseload for decision makers in Australia, without reference to individual applications for protection visas. The report does not contain policy guidance for decision makers.

1.3 Ministerial Direction Number 84 of 24 June 2019, issued under s 499 of the *Migration Act 1958*, states:

Where the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has prepared [a] country information assessment expressly for protection status determination processes, and that assessment is available to the decision maker, the decision maker must take into account that assessment, where relevant, in making their decision. The decision maker is not precluded from considering other relevant information about the country.

1.4 This report draws on DFAT's on-the-ground knowledge and discussions with a range of sources in Myanmar and third-country locations. It takes into account information from government and non-government sources, including but not limited to those produced by the United Nations (UN) Independent International Fact-Finding Mission; other relevant UN agencies including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the US Department of State; recognised human rights organisations including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch; and reputable news organisations. Where DFAT does not refer to a specific source of a report or allegation, this may be to protect the source.

1.5 This updated Country Information Report replaces the previous DFAT report on Myanmar published on 11 November 2022.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

2.1 Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) achieved independence from Britain in 1948, initially as a parliamentary republic. A military coup overthrew the civilian government in 1962, establishing a totalitarian socialist regime under the rule of General Ne Win. Since independence, Myanmar has experienced long periods of military rule, internal conflict and international isolation.

2.2 In 1988, widespread pro-democracy demonstrations led to Ne Win's resignation. The military (known as the 'Tatmadaw') responded by establishing the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and carrying out a violent crackdown that killed approximately 3,000 people. Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) and daughter of independence hero Aung San, rose to prominence during this period. She spent the majority of the next two decades under house arrest in Yangon, until she was released by the government of General Thein Sein in 2010.

2.3 Myanmar held general elections in November 2015, the first to be widely recognised as credible in decades. The NLD won an overwhelming victory, and while Aung San Suu Kyi could not become president due to a constitutional clause drafted to exclude her (see [Political System](#)), she was appointed State Counsellor and Foreign Minister. The NLD government was popular but slow to make reforms and progress the national peace process in response to Myanmar's long-running [ethnic insurgencies](#). The NLD faced international criticism for failing to prevent mass atrocities against the [Rohingya](#) in Rakhine State, which caused an estimated 700,000 people to flee the country between 2016 and 2018.

2.4 In government, the NLD was expected to try to reduce the influence of the [military](#) and pave the way for Aung San Suu Kyi to become President. But after the NLD won the November 2020 election in another overwhelming majority, its victory was rejected by the military, which seized power under the leadership of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 1 February 2021. Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD leaders were detained, and a state of emergency was declared. The coup drew international condemnation and sparked nationwide protests, which the regime violently repressed. In response, NLD and ethnic party representatives formed a government-in-hiding known as the 'National Unity Government' (NUG).

2.5 In September 2021, the NUG announced an [armed revolutionary struggle](#) against the junta, which has continued since, along with renewed fighting between the Myanmar [military](#) and various [ethnic armed organisations](#) (EAOs). Local and international observers have documented widespread human rights violations by regime forces, including indiscriminate air strikes, [extrajudicial killings](#), [arbitrary detention](#) and [torture](#). In August 2023, the regime announced promised elections had been postponed due to ongoing violence.

2.6 In late 2023, a series of armed groups launched offensive operations against the Myanmar military leading to a significant uptick in conflict. As of January 2025, these groups were continuing to capture significant territory in Shan, Rakhine, Kachin, Chin and Kayah states, and Mandalay region, and the regime had lost its regional military commands in Lashio and Ann, as well as the key towns of Laukkai, Mogoke, Thandwe and Buthidaung. By January 2025, the UN reported over 3.5 million people were displaced, including over 3.2

million since 1 February 2021. As at the time of publication, the [security situation](#) throughout Myanmar remained fluid, and there are reports of human rights violations being committed by all parties to the conflict.

DEMOGRAPHY

2.7 The *World Factbook* estimated the population of Myanmar was 58 million in 2024, while provisional results of the 2024 census found a population of 51.3 million. The largest cities were Yangon (5.6 million), Mandalay (1.5 million) and the capital, Nay Pyi Taw (925,000).

2.8 Myanmar is culturally and linguistically diverse. More than 100 languages are spoken, many mutually unintelligible. The national language is Burmese, spoken as a first language by an estimated 32 million people. English was the language of instruction during the colonial period, but this was replaced by Burmese after independence. Today, English is only spoken by approximately 5 per cent of the population. For ethnic demography, see [Race/Nationality](#). For religious demography, see [Religion](#).

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

2.9 Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in Asia, with a GDP per capita of USD 1,190 (AUD 1,900). Agriculture, forestry and fishery account for almost half of GDP and employ two-thirds of the workforce. Other major industries include mining, construction and textiles. There is also a significant shadow economy in illicit drugs, gemstones, human and wildlife trafficking, and illegal logging. The economy experienced a major contraction following the 2021 coup and has been slow to recover.

2.10 Post-coup, poor economic conditions have had far-reaching effects on the lives of many people. Almost half of households suffered a drop in income by 2022, and more than half reported having to sell assets or limit spending, including on health and education. Inflation remained high, fuel prices increased, and food security was a concern for many households as at the time of publication.

2.11 The poor state of the economy has led to widespread job losses. Between 2017 and 2022, although 9 million potential workers were added to Myanmar's population, labour force participation fell by 1.6 per cent, and unemployment rose by 4.8 per cent. [Women's](#) economic participation also dropped, from 60 per cent in 2020 to 55 per cent in 2022. In 2024 an estimated 50 per cent of people were living below the national poverty line (MMK1590 a day).

2.12 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Myanmar 149 out of 191 countries in its 2021-22 Human Development Index (the latest available at the time of publication), placing it towards the bottom of the medium human development category. Ease of doing business in Myanmar has deteriorated significantly since the 2021 coup, and there has been a general shift from a rules and market-based system to one characterised by corruption, monopolies and rent-seeking.

2.13 According to the 2021 *Global Climate Risk Index* (the latest available at the time of publication), Myanmar faced the second-highest risk from extreme weather events worldwide, including cyclones, flooding and landslides. In September 2024, Typhoon Yagi caused severe flooding and landslides in Myanmar that affected nearly 890,000 people, resulting in approximately 384 fatalities and 89 missing. In May 2023, Cyclone Mocha killed more than 400 people, left thousands homeless, and caused an estimated AUD 3.7 billion in damage. In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis killed more than 84,000 people and affected over 2 million.

2.14 Government spending on social welfare programs increased eleven-fold between 2011 and 2018 but collapsed following the 2021 coup. Myanmar previously had two main social welfare programs: the Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT), which provided 15,000 kyats (AUD 11) per month to mothers from pregnancy

until their child was 24 months; and the National Social Pension (SP), which provided 10,000 kyats (AUD 8) per month to people over the age of 85. Both programs ceased following the coup in 2021. Some payments resumed in 2023, including for elderly people and people with disabilities, but in-country sources told DFAT these were intermittent and reached only a very small number of people.

Health

2.15 The overall quality and availability of healthcare services in Myanmar was weak before the 2021 coup and has continued to deteriorate. Critical issues include a lack of doctors and nurses, supply chain disruptions to medicines and equipment, increased out-of-pocket costs, and armed conflict preventing patients from safely accessing clinics and hospitals. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 medical care was still generally available in Yangon, but had become more expensive and harder to access. Most people in rural areas retain access to primary healthcare through village clinics, but their access to hospital care has decreased due to transport disruptions, long wait times and out-of-pocket costs. In areas directly affected by conflict, access to healthcare is greatly reduced.

2.16 Infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS are of significant concern. Cholera cases also reemerged in 2024. Myanmar was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, recording more than 640,000 cases and almost 20,000 deaths, although actual figures were likely higher. Approximately 64 per cent of the population had received at least one COVID-19 vaccination dose as of October 2023. Non-communicable diseases including diabetes, cancer and heart disease are also on the rise.

2.17 The participation of medical personnel in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) left the public health system chronically understaffed and private hospitals overwhelmed by the resulting overflow of patients. EAO-run health systems which exist in some parts of the country have been heavily affected by conflict. Following the coup there were multiple verified reports of the military attacking and killing medical workers and shelling medical centres. Medical workers continue to be targeted for questioning, arrest and violence by the regime, especially where they are involved in the CDM or suspected of helping opposition forces. DFAT is aware of reports of medical workers in conflict areas being threatened with summary execution by Myanmar military soldiers on suspicion of providing medical care to opposition forces.

2.18 Accessing healthcare is difficult or impossible in some parts of the country due to conflict, martial law or curfews. This has contributed to deteriorating maternal and child health outcomes, as [women](#) in particular often avoid seeking healthcare due to violence and insecurity. Supplies of medical equipment, vaccinations and drugs have been significantly impacted by local and international supply chain disruptions. In November 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned Myanmar was at serious risk of a shortage of essential medicines, possibly affecting all health programs in the country.

2.19 Sexual and reproductive health services are limited. Abortion is illegal except where it is deemed medically necessary to save the mother's life. Dangerous, illegal abortions are a leading cause of maternal deaths in Myanmar. Access to contraception is limited, especially since the coup and especially in rural areas. NGOs and public health services delivering sexual and reproductive health services have been negatively affected by the coup, as well as by supply chain disruptions affecting medical supplies (see also [Women](#)).

2.20 There are multiple reports of Myanmar authorities intentionally withholding lifesaving medicine and vaccines from populations in contested areas as a strategy to weaken resistance in those areas. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 this was a nationwide policy of the military regime, stipulated by officials at the highest levels, wherever the regime faced populations that resisted their rule. Rates of diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis have reportedly risen as a result.

Mental Health

2.21 Myanmar has a high prevalence of mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety, exacerbated by the impacts of conflict, COVID-19 and natural disasters. A 2020 report found 18 per cent of 18- to 49-year-olds in Yangon were experiencing 'mental distress', while a 2023 survey of 1,000 people from across Myanmar found a quarter were experiencing moderate to high levels of depression, both much higher than the global average. Suicide rates have reportedly surged since the coup.

2.22 Mental health legislation consists of the *Lunacy Act* (1912). Options for treatment are limited. As of 2023, there were only two psychiatric hospitals in Myanmar (in Yangon and Mandalay), eight clinically trained psychologists, and fewer than 150 psychiatrists working in public hospitals. Mental health services are hard to find in languages other than Burmese, although NGOs provide some counselling and other mental health services for ethnic minorities, including in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Rakhine State. People with mental illness often experienced social stigma, and many avoided treatment for this reason. Societal understanding of mental illness is limited, and many people hold traditional beliefs that mental illness is caused by witchcraft or evil spirits.

HIV/AIDS

2.23 Myanmar has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in Southeast Asia. An estimated 0.9 per cent of the population had HIV in 2024. According to UNAIDS data, 74 per cent of people with HIV were receiving antiretroviral treatments in 2022. That number has almost certainly since declined due to conflict, displacement and supply chain disruptions.

2.24 People living with HIV often experience stigma and discrimination. For instance, a 2016 study found more than 60 per cent of people surveyed would refuse to buy vegetables from an HIV-positive vendor. Besides stigma, barriers to treatment include conflict, low levels of public health funding, a lack of government facilities, government interference with NGOs that deliver services to people living with HIV, and the illegality of sex work and same-sex sexual conduct (see also [Women](#); [LGBTQIA+](#)).

Education

2.25 The overall quality of education in Myanmar is poor and has worsened markedly since the 2021 coup. Over and above the impact of COVID-19 on education, decades of neglect and conflict have resulted in under-resourced schools with underpaid and undertrained teachers using ineffective methods and outdated curricula and teaching materials. According to in-country sources, over 90 per cent of fifth graders in Myanmar were failing basic literacy and numeracy in 2023.

2.26 Following the coup in 2021, an estimated 200,000 teachers walked off the job to protest against the military regime, forcing widespread school closures. Around 130,000 were still participating in civil disobedience in 2023, according to the NUG. By late 2023, most schools in areas under the control of the State Administration Council (SAC) had reopened, and three-quarters of children were back in school. Areas under the control of EAOs often run their own parallel school systems, for instance in Kachin and Kayah states.

2.27 School drop-out rates are very high, with half of students dropping out before high school and only 10 per cent finishing the final year of high school. Gender disparities are small in high school and primary school, but [women](#) are more likely to attend university than men. There are significant geographic variations in enrolment levels, and young people from rural or poor families are less likely to be in school. University enrolments have plunged since the coup, dropping 90 per cent since February 2021 according to statistics published by the Ministry of Education in November 2023.

2.28 Education in many parts of Myanmar has been directly and severely affected by post-coup [conflict](#). According to in-country sources, public schools in Sagaing, Chin, Magway, Kayin and Kayah states remained closed in 2023 due to fighting and airstrikes. A 2022 report by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) found educational facilities were subjected to more than 450 armed attacks in 2020 and 2021, mostly carried out by [military regime forces](#). In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 schools were regularly and deliberately targeted by military regime airstrikes, in some cases killing students and teachers. *Myanmar Witness* analysis shows attacks on schools by the regime steadily increased between February 2021 and March 2024.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

2.29 On 1 February 2021, a military junta under the leadership of Commander in Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing seized control of the Myanmar Government apparatus, hours before a parliament led by the NLD was due to convene. The junta declared the results of the 2020 election – in which the NLD had won an overwhelming victory – invalid, citing unsubstantiated claims of electoral fraud. The [military](#) assumed all executive, legislative and [judicial](#) powers of the state. The country thus became a *de facto* military dictatorship. The coup was described by the International Commission of Jurists as a violation of the ‘rule of law, international law and Myanmar’s Constitution’.

2.30 The day after the coup in 2021, the junta announced Myanmar would be under the control of an executive governing body known as the ‘State Administration Council’ (SAC) which consisted of nine military officers and ten civilians, the latter drawn from a range of [ethnic groups](#) and rival parties to the NLD. Membership of the SAC, as well as other bodies set up by Min Aung Hlaing (including the Cabinet), has been reshuffled several times since the coup. In July 2024, Min Aung Hlaing declared himself acting President.

2.31 On 1 August 2021, Min Aung Hlaing was announced as Prime Minister of a so-called ‘caretaker government’, which would rule the country under a state of emergency until February 2023, after which a ‘free and fair multiparty general election’ would take place. As at the time of publication in 2025, this election had not yet occurred, and the state of emergency had been extended six times since February 2023 up to January 2025. In June 2024, Min Aung Hlaing announced his intention to hold an election in 2025. If it goes ahead, the 2025 election would likely only take place in certain parts of the country which are under the control of the regime. In-country sources reported observers did not consider the commitment to a free and fair election credible.

2.32 In February 2021, a group of almost 300 politicians opposing the military regime formed the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), stating it was the legitimate legislative authority for Myanmar. In April 2021, the CRPH announced the formation of a government-in-hiding called the National Unity Government (NUG), including representatives from the NLD, ethnic minority groups, civil society and minor parties. The CRPH also stood up an accountability body which oversees the NUG called the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) comprised of civil society actors, EAOs, sub-national governance groups and exiled politicians. The NUG and its representatives have met with officials from the US, UK, Australia, ASEAN, the EU and others.

2.33 In September 2021, the NUG announced its intention to begin a nationwide armed struggle against the military regime to be carried out by units of the ‘People’s Defence Force’ (PDF). The NUG and PDF were subsequently designated terrorist organisations by the SAC, along with the CRPH and the NUCC (see also [Security Situation](#); [Political Opinion](#)).

2.34 Administratively, Myanmar is divided into seven regions, seven states, six self-administered zones or divisions, and one ‘union territory’ (where the capital, Nay Pyi Taw, is located). The six self-administered zones/divisions are governed by [ethnic minority groups](#); five within Shan State and one within Sagaing Region.

EAOs control many parts of the country, often operating as parallel or de facto states which provide healthcare, education, and varying degrees of law enforcement (see also [Armed Groups](#)).

2.35 Each state and region has its own legislature, comprising elected officials and appointed administrators. Since the coup in 2021, many regional and local officials have been arrested by the military regime or have resigned, some in protest against the coup and others under threat of reprisals by various PDFs. While some areas under the control of EAOs hold elections for local and regional representatives, most are in effect one-party states.

Corruption

2.36 Corruption is endemic at all levels of Myanmar society, from petty bribery to major corruption. Transparency International ranked Myanmar 162 out of 180 countries in its 2023 *Corruption Perceptions Index*. According to the 2020 *Global Corruption Barometer*, 20 per cent of people surveyed in Myanmar had paid a bribe to access public services in the prior 12 months. Drivers of corruption included low government salaries, cumbersome bureaucratic processes, armed conflict, customs such as gift-giving and ‘tea money’, differing ‘levels’ of citizenship (see [Race/Nationality](#)) and a flourishing shadow economy. In-country sources told DFAT corruption had worsened since the coup in 2021 (see also [Prevalence of Fraud](#)).

2.37 Prior to the February 2021 coup, the NLD government had advanced anti-corruption measures, including passing the *Anti-Corruption Law* (2013) and establishing the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in 2014. Like many public institutions, the ACC was purged following the coup, and its members were replaced with individuals loyal to the military regime. In late 2023, several senior regime figures were arrested on corruption charges, including the Chair of the Myanmar Investment Commission, the Joint Secretary of the Central Committee on Ensuring the Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods, and the Deputy Commerce Minister. In-country sources told DFAT it was unclear whether these charges were politically motivated. The regime also continued to arrest private sector actors in 2023-24, accusing them of corruption and causing inflation through greed.

HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

2.38 The 2008 Constitution guarantees rights and freedoms for its citizens, including freedom of religion, freedom from arbitrary detention and the right to a public trial. In practice, however, such fundamental rights are routinely ignored and violated.

2.39 Myanmar has ratified four of the core UN human rights treaties: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of child prostitution and child pornography. Implementation of these instruments lags.

National Human Rights Institution

2.40 Myanmar established the government-funded Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) in 2011, with a broad legal mandate to protect and promote human rights. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law enables the MNHRC to receive public complaints, investigate human rights abuses, hold the government accountable for the treaties and conventions to which Myanmar is a party, and

make recommendations on additional treaties and conventions for accession. It also allows the MNHRC to undertake inspections of prisons, detention centres and other places of confinement.

2.41 Following its investigations, the MNHRC refers its recommendations to the relevant government department for action but has no power to ensure recommendations are implemented. The MNHRC has failed to hold anyone to account for mistreatment of the Rohingya or abuses following the 2021 coup. When last reviewed by OHCHR in 2015, the MNHRC was given 'B' status, meaning it was not fully in compliance with the Paris Principles on best practice for national human rights institutions. In-country sources told DFAT the MNHRC was highly politicised and ineffective.

SECURITY SITUATION

2.42 Myanmar has been affected by recurrent conflict since its independence in 1948. Long-running ethnic insurgencies have been fuelled by factors including discriminatory policies, inequality and political disenfranchisement, as well as struggles over land, resources, and licit and illicit markets. Following the February 2021 coup, a widespread armed insurgency emerged seeking to attack the military regime and its officials and restore democracy to Myanmar. While the military regime is not the only actor implicated in abuses, it is widely recognised by local and international observers as being responsible for the overwhelming majority of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Myanmar.

2.43 As at the time of publication, the military regime has no direct control over large parts of Myanmar. Armed groups operate along Myanmar's borders with China, Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh and India. The once relatively peaceful 'Bamar heartland', including Mandalay, Yangon, Sagaing and Magway, has seen a sharp rise in violence since the 2021 coup, as local PDFs engage in combat with security forces, and the military regime targets civilians they perceive as supporting their enemies. As of late 2024, martial law was in effect in around 61 townships nationwide, including parts of Yangon and Mandalay.

Armed Groups

2.44 Estimates of the number of armed groups that operate in Myanmar range from dozens to hundreds. There are an estimated 20 major EAOs and PDFs. The most significant EAOs include the Arakan Army (AA), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (KNU/KNLA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA).

2.45 Many of these EAOs (and some PDFs) are large and well-equipped. Besides defending their populations from the military and other armed groups, they often assume some state functions within areas they control (see Political System), levy taxes, and control licit and illicit trade. The line between ethno-nationalist army and criminal gang is often blurry and varies across groups. Individuals associated with armed groups have been both victims and perpetrators of human rights abuses.

2.46 On 5 May 2021, the NUG announced the establishment of the PDF as its armed wing and stated the PDF's aim was 'to defend and protect lives, properties and livelihoods of the people' from violence by the military regime and other forces under the control of the SAC. The NUG further stated that its long-term goals included the overthrow of the military regime and the formation of 'Federal Union Forces' incorporating Myanmar's EAOs.

2.47 The PDF is ostensibly under central command of the NUG and is divided into five regional commands: Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Central. In reality, it consists of hundreds of smaller 'PDFs' and local resistance groups with varying levels of allegiance to, and control by, the NUG. According to the International Crisis Group, in 2021, these ranged from 'underground urban cells consisting of a few people to large,

well-organised militias with hundreds of fighters equipped with modern light arms'. Many PDF recruits are previously non-radicalised young people who said they were driven to violence by the military regime's abuses. A 2022 report by the United States Institute of Peace claimed there were roughly 65,000 PDF fighters.

2.48 Since their establishment in 2021, PDFs have engaged in direct fighting with security forces, sabotaged infrastructure, and carried out shooting and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks against [soldiers](#), [police](#) and [regime officials](#). PDFs also [assassinated](#) regime supporters and alleged collaborators/informers. In April 2024, a PDF drone attack penetrated Nay Pyi Taw airport defences. While an NUG code of conduct directs PDFs to refrain from attacking civilians, PDF attacks have killed civilians, and some have targeted civilian infrastructure. PDFs have received arms and training from EAOs, and in some cases fought alongside these groups against the military regime (particularly in Shan, Kayin, Chin, Kayah and Kachin states). At the start of the conflict, PDFs were often poorly-trained and armed with outdated or makeshift weapons, but according to in-country sources in 2023, their tactics, weapons and training have greatly improved, making them increasingly effective against military regime forces. In addition to EAOs and NUG-aligned PDFs, other local armed groups operate in Myanmar. Although some called themselves PDFs, they are not necessarily under the command of the NUG.

2.49 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 military regime-sponsored militia groups known as 'Pyu Saw Htee' were involved in arson, targeted [assassinations](#), attacks on civilians and spreading disinformation. According to local media reports in 2022, Pyu Saw Htee consisted of 'active and retired [military personnel](#), civil servants, members of the military proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party, ultranationalists and people hired for a wage'. These reports also stated that the Myanmar military had armed and trained Pyu Saw Htee and in some cases conducted operations alongside them.

2.50 Pyu Saw Htee have been implicated in serious human rights abuses. Data for Myanmar, a not-for-profit research group, reported regime-backed groups such as Pyu Saw Htee were responsible for burning down more than 7,000 homes across the country between May 2021 and March 2022. In February 2024, video emerged online of uniformed soldiers, said by witnesses in the video to be members of the Pyu Saw Htee, burning two resistance fighters alive in front of a group of villagers in Gangaw Township, Magway.

Armed Conflict

2.51 Since the 2021 coup, an estimated 50,000 people have died in armed conflict in Myanmar, including over 6,000 civilians. Conflict-related violence includes fighting between armed groups and security forces; attacks on and by regime-affiliated militia groups; targeting of civilian infrastructure; artillery, mortar and surface-to-surface missile strikes; IEDs and unmarked landmines; [abductions](#), [torture](#), [sexual violence](#) and [extrajudicial killings](#); burning of homes and buildings (including [schools](#) and [religious buildings](#)); and air strikes from fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters and drones. In 2023, in-country sources told DFAT the regime continued to pursue its 'four cuts' strategy of depriving resistance groups of food, funds, intelligence and recruits by targeting civilian populations that supported them.

2.52 Air strikes by regime forces increased in 2023, in part due to the reduced capacity of the Myanmar [military](#) to conduct large-scale ground operations. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ALCED) recorded more than 1,000 attacks from aircraft or drones in 2023, double the number in 2022. Many of these attacks have been criticised by local and international observers for indiscriminately or deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure. In addition to opposition bases and training facilities, military air strikes have targeted [schools](#), [churches](#) and refugee camps. In April 2023, an air strike on an opposition-controlled building in Sagaing killed more than 160 people, many of them civilians.

2.53 In October 2023, an alliance of three EAOs – the AA, TNLA and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) (the 'Three Brotherhood Alliance') – launched a coordinated offensive against SAC

forces in Shan State. This offensive, known as ‘Operation 1027’, was followed by attacks against the junta by opposition groups in other parts of the country. Operation 1027 resulted in significant losses for the SAC of territory, personnel, weapons, vehicles, prestige and morale. In January 2024, the Three Brotherhood Alliance seized Kokang in northern Shan State, including the city of Laukkai, where local media reported Three Brotherhood Alliance fighters had captured more than 2,000 regime soldiers. Also in 2024, as part of Phase 2 of Operation 1027, the Three Brotherhood Alliance captured the military regime Northeastern Regional Operations Command (ROC) in Lashio. This was the first time the Myanmar military had lost an ROC since independence. The Three Brotherhood Alliance also captured key towns in Mandalay region, including the lucrative ruby mining town of Mogok.

2.54 In Rakhine state, the Arakan Army (AA) relaunched offensive operations in November 2023. In July 2024, the Lowy Institute estimated the AA had de facto authority over 50 to 75 per cent of Rakhine State, as well as territory in southern Chin state bordering India. The Myanmar military surrendered many bases and caches of weapons to the AA, and some Myanmar military and border police forces have sought safety in neighbouring Bangladesh and India.

2.55 According to UNHCR, as at June 2024, more than 2.9 million people in Myanmar had been internally displaced since the coup, including 1.139 million to neighbouring countries due to pre and post-coup conflict. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 ‘multiple displacement’ was common, and some people had been forced to move as many as 10 times to avoid fighting and air strikes. Displaced populations often struggle to meet their basic needs, including adequate food, medicine, healthcare and education.

2.56 Landmines and unexploded ordinance (UXO) are growing threats throughout Myanmar. According to the UN, civilian casualties from landmines increased by 40 per cent in 2022. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 landmine and UXO contamination affected every state and region in Myanmar except Nay Pyi Taw. Landmines are used by all sides of the conflict, causing indiscriminate death, injury and disablement, leaving houses and farmland unusable, and killing and injuring livestock.

2.57 Explosions and other security incidents occur in Yangon and, more frequently, in other parts of the country. Attacks are unpredictable in their location and intensity. The US Department of State recorded an average of 14 IED attacks per month in Yangon from January to July 2023. Nay Pyi Taw is considered more secure than other parts of the country due to the large presence of regime security forces, although opposition forces carried out a series of drone attacks on regime forces there in April 2024. Opposition forces have also attacked military checkpoints, train stations and railways. Armed groups aligned to the Myanmar military regime carry out frequent IED and shooting attacks, leading international security analysts to warn in 2023 of an escalating cycle of tit-for-tat violence between pro- and anti-regime forces throughout the country.

Violent and Organised Crime

2.58 In-country sources told DFAT since the 2021 coup there had been a serious deterioration in law and order throughout Myanmar, including a spike in armed robbery and other violent crime, and a significant increase in drug use and trafficking. Authorities have limited capacity and willingness to respond to non-political crimes, and victims are often reluctant to report crime due to very low levels of public trust in [police](#). Even serious crimes such as rape and murder often go unreported.

2.59 Organised crime is a major problem in Myanmar. Myanmar is the world’s second-largest producer of opium and the largest producer of methamphetamines. Illegal logging, mining and wildlife smuggling are rife, and, according to in-country sources in 2023, involve both EAOs and regime officials. Criminal gangs operate large-scale online and telephone scam centres in parts of Myanmar staffed by thousands of people, many of whom have been trafficked and are held against their will. In October 2023, thousands of Chinese victims of human traffickers were freed from some of these centres as part of Operation 1027 (see [Security Situation](#)),

and more than 40,000 were repatriated. Criminal loan shark gangs operate in Myanmar and in some cases have links to international crime syndicates. Loan sharks are often linked to gambling, both legal and illegal.

Civil Unrest

2.60 Following the February 2021 coup, demonstrations broke out throughout Myanmar, including in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw, as well as in smaller cities. According to local and international media reports, some demonstrations drew as many as 150,000 protesters. At the same time, [healthcare workers](#) and civil servants launched a nationwide [civil disobedience movement \(CDM\)](#), which was joined by railway workers, garbage collectors, bank workers, electricity workers and others.

2.61 The military regime's response to the [protest](#) movement has been harsh and wide-ranging, and includes restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, the arrest and detention of protestors, the spreading of disinformation, and the beating, [torture](#) and [killing](#) of protestors and first aid responders. While large-scale demonstrations had largely ceased by late 2021, protestors continued to organise occasional 'flash-mob' protests throughout the country as of 2024, risking [arrest](#), torture and [detention](#) by authorities (see also [Political Opinion](#)).

Human trafficking

2.62 Myanmar is a major source and destination country for human trafficking. While anti-trafficking laws exist and are sometimes enforced, the US Department of State listed Myanmar as a Tier 3 country in its 2023 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, stating it was a country whose government 'd[id] not fully comply with the minimum standards and [we]re not making significant efforts to do so'. There was evidence of government officials and [law enforcement officers](#) participating in, facilitating or profiting from human trafficking. Efforts to combat trafficking have reportedly decreased since the coup in 2021.

2.63 Victims of human trafficking are often sold into forced labour, including in the mining industry, on palm and rubber plantations, in illegal scam centres, in fruit farming and factory work in northwestern Thailand, and in Thai and Taiwanese fishing fleets. Women are subjected to sex trafficking and forced marriage, both within Myanmar and overseas, especially China. In 2019, UN Women and Human Rights Watch reported traffickers were luring or coercing Kachin women into China for forced marriages and sexual slavery. Rohingya women are reportedly trafficked to Malaysia for forced marriage to Rohingya men. Foreigners are trafficked into Myanmar, including to work in scam centres, brothels and casinos in Wa and Shan states. [Women](#), [children](#), [LGBTQIA+ people](#), [ethnic minorities](#) and IDPs are at particular risk of human trafficking.

3. REFUGEE CONVENTION CLAIMS

RACE/NATIONALITY

3.1 Ethnicity in Myanmar is a determinant of citizenship and basic rights, a factor in political and armed conflict, and a source of discrimination, particularly for the [Rohingya](#). In 2024, the *World Factbook* estimated the population of Myanmar was 68 per cent Burman (Bamar), 9 per cent Shan, 7 per cent [Karen](#), 4 per cent Rakhine, 3 per cent Chinese, 2 per cent Indian, 2 per cent Mon, and 5 per cent ‘other’.

3.2 Official designations of race are often arbitrary and reflect colonial era understandings of racial classification rather than the reality of ethnic diversity in Myanmar. Identity in Myanmar is complex, involving elements of ethnicity, [religion](#), [language](#) and geographic location. Different members of the same family may identify as different races, and people’s officially recognised race or religion may be different from how they self-identify.

3.3 The *Burma Citizenship Law* (1982), establishes a hierarchy of citizens on the basis of ethnicity, a situation the International Commission of Jurists said in 2019 ‘enable[d] widespread discrimination throughout the country and undermine[d] the rule of law’. Citizenship by birth is only granted to people who are born to two parents from ethnic groups considered ‘*taingyintha*’ (meaning ordinarily resident in Myanmar prior to 1823), most of whom belong to the Bamar, China Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine and Shan ethnic groups. ‘Full citizenship’ is granted both to those who qualify for citizenship by birth by being of *taingyintha* descent and those who are born to two citizen parents. ‘Associate’ citizenship is granted to those who had previously applied under the *Union Citizenship Act* (1948) and had a pending application when the *Burma Citizenship Act* (1982) became law. A final category, naturalised citizens, includes those resident in Myanmar prior to independence in 1948 and their descendants born and resident in Myanmar who are not considered *taingyintha*, and have not previously applied under the pre-1982 citizenship legislation. The International Commission of Jurists reported the ‘key distinction between these two categories [associate and naturalised citizens] was whether or not the applicant, or their parent/s, had applied for citizenship under the *Union Citizenship Act* (1948) prior to the enactment of the 1982 Law’.

3.4 In 1990, the military government of Myanmar, known as the ‘State Law and Order Restoration Council’ (SLORC), published a list of ethnic groups comprising ‘135 national races’ it considered to be *taingyintha* ethnicities ordinarily resident in Myanmar before the British colonial period. The 135 ethnic groups were categorised into eight ‘Major National Ethnic Races’: Bamar, Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. The [Rohingya](#) were not formally recognised as *taingyintha* by the government. The current Myanmar regime still recognises this list of ethnic groups, with some small additions, but continues to exclude the Rohingya.

3.5 Groups not considered *taingyintha* have to furnish considerable proof of residency and genealogy to apply for citizenship, and many wait for years. [Rohingya](#) and many people of Chinese or Indian descent, as well as religious minorities such as [Hindus](#) and [Muslims](#), are excluded from citizenship by birth and are required to undergo a lengthy citizenship scrutiny process when applying for citizenship as teenagers or adults.

3.6 Section 347 of Myanmar’s 2008 Constitution guarantees ‘any person to enjoy equal rights’ and protections before the law, but many people are denied these rights in law and practice. People without full

citizenship are excluded from certain professions, including medicine and law. Informal ceilings also apply to all non-Bamar ethnicities in government and military jobs, preventing them from reaching higher ranks. Ethnic minorities are more likely than the Bamar majority to be undocumented (see [Statelessness](#)). Many ethnic minorities have experienced violence and displacement due to ongoing conflict in their home states and regions (see also [Security Situation](#)).

3.7 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 racial discrimination in Myanmar was widespread, institutionalised, and privileged Bamar Buddhists over other groups, especially over people with darker skin and those who did not speak fluent Burmese. People belonging to, or perceived as belonging to, so-called ‘mixed races’ (a term used to refer those of [South Asian](#) or Chinese heritage) were forced to queue separately when accessing government services, and sometimes reported racial abuse and discrimination from officials, including the use of ethnic slurs and refusals or delays when accessing public services. School curricula sometimes includes racist content, such as poetry encouraging the hatred of people with ‘mixed blood’.

3.8 DFAT assesses members of non-Bamar (minority) ethnic groups in Myanmar face a moderate risk of societal and official discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity, while for groups such as the [Rohingya](#), the risk is much higher (see individual sections below). Minority ethnic groups including the [Chin](#), [Karen](#), [Karenni](#) and others experience violence at the hands of the state, largely on the basis of actual or perceived association with armed resistance movements (see also [Security Situation](#); [Political Opinion \(Actual or Imputed\)](#)).

Chin

3.9 The Chin are a linguistically and culturally diverse ethnic group who mostly live in Chin State, Sagaing Region, Magway Region and Rakhine State, although smaller populations of Chin also live throughout the country. There are an estimated 500,000 Chin in Myanmar. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 as many as 100,000 Chin lived in Yangon, although few were registered as living there on their household lists (see [Documentation](#)). There are multiple Chin tribes, including Asho, Cho, Khumi, Kuki, Laimi, Lushai and Zomi. Traditionally these sub-groups were identifiable by unique clothing, tattoos and traditions, but these cultural markers have become rarer. Most Chin are Christians, but a minority follow Buddhism or animism. A small number identify as being of Jewish descent.

3.10 Local and international media and rights groups have long documented human rights violations by Myanmar security forces against the Chin, including forced labour, [arbitrary detention](#), and [torture](#), as well as repression of their [Christian religion](#). The population of Chin State strongly opposed the 2021 coup, including through mass protests and one of the highest rates of [CDM participation](#) in the country. Numerous Chin armed groups formed in response to the military regime’s violent crackdown, and conflict between the military regime and these groups was ongoing as at the time of publication in 2025 (see [Security Situation](#)).

3.11 Since the 2021 coup, there have been widespread reports of severe human rights violations in Chin State, including indiscriminate air strikes, arson and shelling attacks, [enforced disappearances](#), [extrajudicial killings](#) and [torture](#). The Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO), an NGO, estimated in July 2022 that since the coup: more than 250 Chin civilians have been killed by SAC forces; more than 1,800 houses have been destroyed across Chin state; more than 900 Chin people have been arrested for political crimes; and 65 churches and religious buildings have been destroyed in Chin State (see also [Christians](#)).

3.12 In 2023, the UN estimated more than 60,000 Chin had fled to the Indian border states of Mizoram and Manipur, and at least 60,000 more were internally displaced (for information on the situation of Chin refugees in India, see the [DFAT Country Information Report on India](#)). In-country sources told DFAT significant numbers of Chin had also fled to Malaysia and Thailand.

3.13 Chin living within and outside Chin State have experienced discrimination in accessing government services, including when procuring identity documents and when seeking government employment and promotion. Chin also reported experiencing harassment by security forces at checkpoints, similar to that experienced by other non-Bamar, non-Buddhist ethnic minorities in Myanmar. In-country sources told DFAT in 2022 Chin who spoke Burmese well were less likely to experience discrimination than those who did not.

3.14 DFAT assesses Chin face a high risk of official discrimination and state violence in active conflict zones including Chin State, Sagaing Region, Magway Region and Rakhine State on the basis of their ethnicity and perceived or actual association with [armed resistance groups](#). Elsewhere in Myanmar, Chin face similar risks of societal and official discrimination to other non-Bamar ethnicities. Christian Chin face similar risks to other [Christians](#) in Myanmar, noting these risks are particularly acute in conflict zones.

Karen

3.15 The term Karen encompasses an ethnically and linguistically diverse group of Tibeto-Burman-speaking ethnicities that make up an estimated 7 per cent of Myanmar's population (around 4 to 5 million people). Sub-groups include Sgaw, Pwo, Bre, Padaung, Yinbaw, and Zayein. Karen primarily reside in the southeastern border region of the country, particularly Kayin State, Tenasserim Division, eastern Bago Division, Mon State and Irrawaddy Division. Most Karen follow Buddhism, [Christianity](#) or traditional animist religions; a small number are [Muslim](#).

3.16 Much of northern and southern Kayin State is controlled by Karen [EAOs](#), in particular the KNU/KNLA (see [Armed Groups](#)). Conflict between the Myanmar military, KNU/KNLA and other ethnic armed organisations since 1984 has led to approximately 90,000 Karen seeking long-term protection in Thailand (see the [DFAT Country Information Report on Thailand](#)). There have been further mass movements within Myanmar and across borders in response to violence since the 2021 coup (see [Security Situation](#)). As of July 2024, UNHCR recorded around 210,000 IDPs in Kayin State and 899,000 across the southeast.

3.17 There are longstanding reports of human rights violations by Myanmar security forces against the Karen, and their situation has worsened since the coup. Incidents include indiscriminate air strikes and shelling, burning of civilian properties, [arbitrary arrests](#), [torture](#), deprivation of humanitarian aid and the use of Karen as human shields. SAC aircraft have carried out hundreds of airstrikes on Karen territory since 2021, destroying civilian infrastructure and killing more than 120 people, many of them civilians. The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), an NGO, recorded at least 45 [illegal killings](#) of civilians in Kayin State between January 2022 and April 2023, which they said reflected a 'shoot-on-sight' policy of Myanmar military soldiers towards Karen villagers in their areas of operation. KHRG has also documented a much smaller number of illegal killings and other abuses by non-state armed groups in Karen areas.

3.18 Prior to the 2021 coup (and the COVID-19 pandemic), Karen living in Kayin State could generally access services, including healthcare, education and justice, provided through parallel structures of government by the KNU, as well as NGOs. Many of these services have since been disrupted by conflict, especially schools and healthcare. Clinics often lack essential equipment and medicines, and schools lack basic supplies such as books and pencils. Large numbers of [CDM](#) participants and other opponents of the regime have sought refuge in KNU/KNLA territory since the 2021 coup. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 while these people often brought valuable skills, they had put further strain on local services and resources.

3.19 In-country sources reported, like other non-Bamar ethnic minorities, Karen living outside of areas under EAO control experienced discrimination when accessing government services, procuring [identity documents](#), seeking government [employment](#) and promotion, and attempting to pass security forces at checkpoints. In-country sources told DFAT in 2022 Karen who spoke Burmese well were less likely to experience discrimination than those who did not.

3.20 DFAT assesses Karen living in conflict areas, including in Kayin State, face a high risk of state violence and displacement on the basis of their ethnicity and perceived or actual association with armed resistance groups, and a low risk of violence at the hands of non-state armed groups. Elsewhere in Myanmar, Karen face similar risks of societal and official discrimination to other non-Bamar ethnicities.

People of South Asian Descent

3.21 There are an estimated 2.5 million people of Indian descent in Myanmar, as well as people whose ancestors migrated from pre-independence Pakistan or Bangladesh. These groups are often perceived as a single group by ethnic Bamar, regardless of their ethnic or religious identity. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 more than half of all people of Indian descent in Myanmar lacked [citizenship cards](#). People of South Asian descent also experience discrimination on the basis of their skin colour and presumed association with [Islam](#) (even though most are [Hindu](#)).

3.22 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 people of South Asian descent were often called by racial slurs, forced to queue separately at government offices, and sometimes experienced abuse and discrimination at the hands of officials, for instance by having their race listed as ‘mixed blood’ on their passport. Some people of South Asian descent reported discriminatory treatment at public [hospitals](#) in 2023. Conversely, some people of South Asian descent are quite wealthy and enjoy business links with the [military](#) and the regime.

3.23 Due to the implementation of the *Burma Citizenship Law* (1982), many people of South Asian descent are denied citizenship, especially if they are poor and uneducated. This creates barriers to accessing public services and buying land. Like other undocumented people, people of South Asian descent may be able to enrol at state [universities](#) but are barred from graduating, although in-country sources told DFAT it was sometimes possible to arrange for graduation with the payment of a bribe six to eight months after completing a degree. People of South Asian descent who hold identity cards are often misidentified on them as ‘Buddhist’ despite being [Hindu](#).

3.24 DFAT assesses people of South Asian descent face a moderate risk of societal discrimination and a low risk of violence. Those without citizenship face a high risk of official discrimination, including denial of basic rights and access to services, on the basis of their ethnicity. Those of South Asian descent with citizenship face a moderate risk of official discrimination. For discrimination and violence on the basis of religion, see [Hindus](#); [Muslims](#).

Rohingya

3.25 The Rohingya are a predominantly Sunni [Muslim](#) ethnic group that traditionally lives in Rakhine State in north-western Myanmar, near Bangladesh. The Rohingya speak an Indo-Aryan language closely related but not identical to the dialect of Bengali spoken in the Chittagong region of Bangladesh. The Rohingya trace their origins to Muslim traders and bodyguards who lived in north-western Myanmar since the Mrauk-U period (1430-1784), although many migrated from Bangladesh more recently, especially during the British colonial period (1784-1948). An estimated 1.2 million Rohingya lived in Myanmar before August 2017, when a [military](#) crackdown caused around 700,000 of them to flee to Bangladesh.

3.26 Since the 1962 military coup, successive governments have stated that the Rohingya are ‘illegal migrants’ from Bangladesh, marginalised them and stripped them of their rights. Up until the late 1980s, many Rohingya held [National Registration Cards](#) (NRCs) identifying them as Burmese citizens, but following a ‘citizenship scrutiny’ exercise in 1989, these were replaced with Citizenship Scrutiny Cards (CSCs), of which very few were issued to Rohingya. In 1995, the government began issuing Temporary Registration Cards (TRCs,

also known as ‘white cards’) to Rohingya, but these were declared invalid in 2015, leaving most Rohingya undocumented and effectively stateless (see also [Documentation](#)).

3.27 Due to their exclusion from citizenship, the Rohingya are denied fundamental rights and basic services in Myanmar, including access to [healthcare](#) and [education](#), [employment opportunities](#), [freedom of movement](#), freedom to choose the timing and number of their children, freedom to marry whom they choose, and freedom to run for [political office](#). The Rohingya are particularly affected by the *Burma Citizenship Law* (1982) and the *Race and Religion Protection Laws* (2015) (see [Religion](#)), which simultaneously exclude them from citizenship and single them out for discrimination. The Rohingya have been subjected to repeated waves of violence and displacement in Myanmar since independence: in 1977-1979, 1991-1992, 2012, 2015, and 2016-18. This violence included massacres, sexual violence and the burning of villages. Since the ceasefire between the [military](#) and the Arakan Army broke down in Rakhine state in November 2023, Rohingya civilians have increasingly been caught up in the conflict. There are reports of large-scale attacks, burning of villages and town residences, and mass displacement. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 the Rohingya were often called by racial slurs and subjected to hate speech, including on the basis of their [Muslim](#) religion.

3.28 As of 2023, approximately 130,000 Rohingya were living in ‘temporary’ camps in central Rakhine, having been there since state-sponsored violence displaced them in 2012. In-country and international sources told DFAT in 2023 conditions in these camps were dire, shelter was inadequate and deteriorating, and residents were entirely dependent on limited outside aid for food, medical care and education. The COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 coup both reportedly contributed to a decrease in external monitoring of these camps, as well as the withdrawal of key humanitarian donors, although some international NGOs (INGOs) continued to monitor conditions through local partners in 2023. For information on the situation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, see the [DFAT Country Information Report on Bangladesh](#).

3.29 An estimated 100,000 Rohingya live in isolated villages in central Rakhine, surrounded by security forces and other [ethnic communities](#). In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that Rohingya living in these areas are among the most vulnerable populations in Myanmar. They are not allowed in towns and generally cannot access markets, [schools](#) or [healthcare](#), except through onerous permit procedures. [Employment](#) opportunities for Rohingya in central Rakhine are scarce, and workers such as fishermen often pay bribes to be allowed to work. A further 400,000 or so Rohingya live in northern Rakhine, where they make up the majority of the population. Rohingya in these areas are not allowed to enter other townships, but could travel within their own townships and have some access to education and healthcare. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 relations between the Rohingya and other ethnic groups in Rakhine had improved in recent years but remained fragile.

3.30 A resurgence in conflict in northern Rakhine state in 2024 further displaced large numbers of Rohingya people from their villages and residences in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships. There have been reports of both the [military](#) regime and opposition [armed groups](#), particularly the AA, recruiting Rohingya as soldiers and labourers. Large numbers of Rohingya continue to experience arson and shelling attacks.

3.31 Throughout Rakhine, Rohingya are vulnerable to [human trafficking](#) and exploitation by criminal gangs, as well as violence at the hands of security forces and other ethnic groups. Rohingya in Rakhine face severe restrictions on their movements, frequent harassment and violence at checkpoints, and arbitrary detention and fines if they fail to produce [identification documents](#), which many of them lack. In April 2024, reports emerged in local and international media of the Myanmar military [forcibly recruiting](#) Rohingya in Rakhine State. As of 2023, some Rohingya outside Rakhine were reportedly able to improve their situation by obtaining documentation identifying them as ‘Bamar Muslim’ or Kaman (another Muslim ethnic group), but they still faced significant discrimination on the basis of their [skin colour](#) and [religion](#).

3.32 According to a 2022 report by UN Women, since the 2021 coup, Rohingya [women](#) in Rakhine were at increased risk of [gender-based violence](#) (GBV), early and forced marriages, and human trafficking. The 2022

UN Women report stated that GBV in Rakhine was fuelled by negative social norms and gender stereotypes (see also [Women](#)).

3.33 DFAT assesses Rohingya in Myanmar are at high risk of official discrimination, including denial of basic rights and services, on the basis of their ethnicity and [Muslim](#) religion. Within Rakhine State, Rohingya face a moderate risk of societal discrimination from other ethnic groups and a high risk of violence from security forces and ethnic militias. Outside Rakhine State, Rohingya face a similar risk of official and societal discrimination, but a lower risk of violence. Undocumented Rohingya outside Rakhine State face a high risk of abuse and exploitation, and are subject to arrest and detention by the authorities for ‘illegal’ movements.

RELIGION

3.34 Section 34 of Myanmar’s 2008 Constitution entitles all Myanmar citizens to ‘freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess and practice religion subject to public order, morality or health’. Section 361 of the Constitution ‘recognises the special position of Buddhism’ as the faith professed by the majority of citizens. Section 362 of the 2008 Constitution recognises [Christianity](#), [Islam](#), [Hinduism](#) and animism as ‘the religions existing in the Union at the day of the coming into operation of this Constitution’. Other provisions of the 2008 Constitution prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, including Section 352, which bans discrimination in the employment of public officials. Nevertheless, in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 many people in Myanmar experienced discrimination on the basis of religion, including in law.

3.35 Four laws known as the *Race and Religion Protection Laws* (2015) concern interfaith marriage, religious conversion, monogamy and population control. The four laws were first proposed by the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion (an nationalist Buddhist organisation, known as Ma Ba Tha). The *Buddhist Women Special Marriage Law* (2015) requires notification and registration of marriages between non-Buddhist men and Buddhist women, and includes penalties for non-compliance. The *Religious Conversion Law* (2015) allows conversion only through an extensive application and approval process. The *Population Control Law* (2015) designates special zones in which population control measures can be applied, including authorising local authorities to implement three-year birth spacing, enforced through fines and arrests. The *Monogamy Law* (2015) bans polygamy, which was already criminalised under the *Penal Code* (1861). The UN Special Rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar stated in 2015 the four laws targeted [Rohingya](#) and other [Muslims](#), although they also affect [Christians](#) and [Hindus](#). The *Race and Religion Protection Laws* (2015) remain in force, although in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 enforcing them was not a priority for the Myanmar regime as it attempted to deal with the nationwide armed resistance.

Christians

3.36 Christians make up approximately 6 per cent of Myanmar’s population. They mostly belong to the Baptist, Catholic and Anglican denominations, along with several smaller Protestant groups. Most members of the [Chin](#), Kachin and Naga ethnic groups are Christian, as are many [Karen](#) and Karenni. As well as playing a spiritual and temporal role in Christian communities, Christian churches and organisations deliver humanitarian assistance throughout the country (see [Civil Society](#)).

3.37 While there are no legal restrictions on Christians practicing their faith, their ability to do so is often impacted by regime policies and actions, especially in conflict-affected areas. Like other minorities, Christians are underrepresented in the public sector and reportedly barred from holding senior positions in the security forces or government ministries. Like [Muslims](#) and [Hindus](#), Christians are affected by the Preservation of Race and Religion Laws (see [Religion](#)), although in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 the laws were not being actively enforced.

3.38 Under the *Organisation Registration Law* (2022), it is illegal for religious organisations to conduct humanitarian activities, which many Christians consider a requirement of their faith. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 anti-Christian material circulated on social media platforms such as Telegram, and regime forces and their supporters often portrayed Christian populations as ‘disloyal’, for instance referring to resistance fighters as ‘Christian PDFs’.

3.39 Christians in Wa State have historically faced persecution by the UWSA (see [Security Situation](#)), which launched a campaign in 2018 to close churches and detain Christian pastors and worshippers, stating it was acting ‘to prevent religious extremism’. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 the situation for Christians in Wa State had since improved, and they had generally been able to worship freely since December 2023.

3.40 DFAT is aware of some reports of attempts to convert Christians to Buddhism through charity, although in-country sources said in 2023 forced conversion was rare. In 2019, *Morning Star News*, a Christian online news site, reported five local officials in Rakhine State kidnapped two ethnic Chin Christians and threatened expulsion from their village if they did not convert to Buddhism.

3.41 Since the 2021 coup, security forces are reported to have deliberately bombed, shelled, looted, vandalised and burned down Christian churches, as well as commandeered them to use as military bases. In 2024, international media reported at least 67 Christian churches had been destroyed since the coup, many reportedly deliberately. In January 2024, a regime air strike carried out during church services killed 17 people and damaged a Baptist church in Kanan Village, Sagaing region. In May 2021, four people were killed and at least eight wounded when a Catholic church in Loikaw, Kayah State, was shelled by soldiers who reportedly knew civilians were sheltering inside. In April 2022, soldiers occupied the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Mandalay, taking an archbishop and dozens of worshippers hostage.

3.42 Since the 2021 coup, security forces have targeted Christian church leaders for arbitrary detention, inhuman treatment, kidnappings and extrajudicial killings. According to a November 2023 Radio Free Asia report, at least five Christian pastors and three deacons have been killed by SAC forces since the coup. In November 2023, regime soldiers ambushed and killed a Christian pastor in Saw, Magway. In March 2021, four Baptist ministers and seven worshippers were arrested in Lashio and reportedly beaten while in custody. In September 2021, Cung Biak Hum, a Baptist pastor, was shot while attempting to put out a fire in Thantlang, Chin State; after killing him, soldiers cut off the pastor’s finger and stole his wedding ring.

3.43 DFAT assesses Christians in Myanmar face a moderate risk of official discrimination and violence, on the basis of their religion, in the form of harassment and physical attacks by security forces, and a low risk of societal discrimination in the form of online hate speech and occasional attempts at forced conversion. Church leaders face a higher risk of violence from security forces, especially in conflict zones.

Hindus

3.44 Hindus make up around 0.5 per cent of Myanmar’s population. According to the 2024 census, Hindus resided in almost all regions, with the highest population in Bago. There are also significant Hindu communities in Yangon and Mandalay.

3.45 Like other people of South Asian descent, Hindus experience discrimination in the issuance of identity documents and in accessing government services, including public healthcare. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 the Bamar Buddhist majority often conflated Hindus with [Muslims](#) and/or the [Rohingya](#). Hindus are often called by racial slurs and required to queue separately in government offices. An estimated 68 per cent of Hindus lack citizenship cards (see [Documentation](#)).

3.46 Hindus in Myanmar are generally free to practise their religion, although like other minority religions they face barriers in establishing new places of worship. Hindus are able to celebrate religious festivals, and

according to in-country sources, Buddhists often attend Hindu sacred sites and festivities. Like [Christians](#) and [Muslims](#), Hindus are affected by the Race and Religion Protection Laws (see [Religion](#)), although in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 the laws were not actively enforced at that time.

3.47 Community violence against Hindus is rare but has occurred. In August 2017, up to 53 Hindus were massacred and another 46 disappeared in northern Maungdaw, Rakhine State. An investigation by Amnesty International in 2017 found ARSA (the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, see [Security Situation](#)) responsible, but ARSA denied involvement. A UN Fact-Finding Mission was unable to verify the details of this event. As at the date of publication, more than 1,000 Hindus from Rakhine State remain displaced in refugee camps in Bangladesh as a result of the violence in Rakhine State in 2017 (see the [DFAT Country Information Report on Bangladesh](#)).

3.48 DFAT assesses Hindus in Myanmar face a moderate risk of official and societal discrimination in the form of inequitable access to services and hate speech, and a low risk of violence, on the basis of their religion and perceived association with the [Rohingya](#).

Muslims

3.49 There are a number of distinct Muslim communities living throughout Myanmar, including the Kaman, Pantay, Pashu, [Rohingya](#) and Zerbadee. Most are Sunni. Census data shows Muslims make up approximately 4 per cent of the population, although this figure underrepresents Rohingya Muslims, who were effectively excluded from participating. The majority of Muslims live in northern Rakhine State, but there are also Muslim communities in Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Magway and Mandalay.

3.50 Muslims in Myanmar experience discrimination and restrictions on their ability to practise their faith. There were no Muslim ministers under the previous NLD government, nor are there any Muslim members of the regime's SAC. Among the opposition NUG, there is one Muslim member of the CRPH (see [Political System](#)), and a Rohingya Muslim serves as the NUG's Deputy Human Rights Minister. According to in-country sources, Muslims are generally excluded from careers including the military, civil service, engineering and the medical profession, although in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 some Muslims were employed as teachers.

3.51 Muslims are often denied basic rights and services on the basis of their religion. Up to 80 per cent lack citizenship documents, and many find it difficult or impossible to obtain them, even if qualified (see [Documentation](#)). Reasons vary, ranging from the Muslim applicant being unable to provide extensive and often difficult-to-obtain documentation to prove *taingyintha* status, to the refusal of immigration authorities to register a Muslim person as Bamar, the majority ethnicity. Some Muslims have been required to choose a 'foreign' ethnicity (such as Bengali) to self-identify as Muslim on applications for citizenship cards.

3.52 In-country Muslim sources told DFAT anti-Muslim sentiment in Myanmar had declined since the 2021 coup, as the regime shifted focus to repressing the armed resistance. In-country sources said many Bamar people had become more sympathetic to Muslims since they had experienced military regime oppression firsthand. Nevertheless, in 2023 Islamophobic material continued to circulate through social media, state institutions and news websites. According to in-country sources, Muslims often experience racial slurs and hate speech, including in public. Muslims are generally able to worship without interference, although no new mosques have been approved in Myanmar since 1962, and Muslims are often forced to worship in private homes due to a lack of mosques in their local area.

3.53 Prior to the 2021 coup, ultranationalist Buddhist movements such as Ma Ba Tha and the 969 Movement were influential in fomenting anti-Muslim hatred in Myanmar. In-country sources told DFAT the influence of these groups had waned as of 2023, but strong links remained between ultranationalist Buddhism and the military regime. Military regime soldiers are reported to receive anti-Islamic indoctrination, and the

regime reportedly continues to carry out anti-Muslim disinformation campaigns. Pro-military Facebook users have made false statements linking [PDFs](#) and the [political opposition](#) to foreign Islamic terrorist groups.

3.54 DFAT assesses Muslims in Rakhine State, regardless of ethnicity, face a high risk of official and societal discrimination, in the form of hate speech and inequitable access to services, and a moderate risk of violence, on the basis of their religion and perceived association with the [Rohingya](#) (who face specific, higher risks). DFAT assesses Muslims outside of Rakhine State face moderate levels of official and societal discrimination in the form of hate speech and inequitable access to services, and a low risk of violence, on the basis of their religion.

POLITICAL OPINION (ACTUAL OR IMPUTED)

Legal framework for political expression

3.55 The 2008 Constitution describes the political system of Myanmar as a ‘genuine, disciplined multi-party democratic system’. Under Sections 404-406 of the Constitution, political parties have the right to form, organise freely, and participate and compete in elections. Freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are likewise guaranteed under Section 354 ‘if not contrary to the laws, enacted for Union security, prevalence of law and order, community peace and tranquillity or public order and morality’. In reality, these rights and freedoms are routinely violated by the government. Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar has effectively been a military dictatorship.

3.56 The military regime makes extensive use of criminal charges to suppress its opponents. Since the 2021 coup, most political prisoners have been charged under Section 505A of the *Penal Code* (1861) - also known as ‘the Sedition Law’ - which criminalises expression intended to incite mutiny or ‘cause fear’ and attracts penalties of up to three years in prison. Other laws frequently used to suppress dissent include Sections 121, 122 and 124 of the *Penal Code* (1861), which deal with ‘High Treason’ and attract penalties of up to 20 years imprisonment or the [death penalty](#).

3.57 While the regime continues to use Section 505A of the *Penal Code* (1861) to suppress dissent, it also increasingly uses the *Counter-Terrorism Law* (2014), which was amended in 2021 to broaden its scope and provide for harsher penalties, ranging from three years to life imprisonment or the [death penalty](#). An estimated 60 per cent of people charged with ‘political crimes’ in 2023 were charged under the *Counter-Terrorism Law* (2014). Those targeted under the *Counter-Terrorism Law* (2014) were charged with financially supporting [PDFs](#) or failing to notify authorities of the whereabouts of family members reported to be PDF members. Some individuals have been charged with possessing weapons or bomb-making material faced under the *Arms Act* (2023) and/or *Explosives Act* (1884). In-country legal sources told DFAT in 2023 many of those charged under these laws had no direct links to the armed resistance.

3.58 The military regime suspended Sections 5, 7 and 8 of the *Law Protecting the Privacy and Security of Citizens* (2021), revoking the rights to be free from [arbitrary detention](#) and warrantless surveillance, search and seizure. It has also amended Sections 124 and 505 of the *Penal Code* (1861) to include vaguely worded offences such as ‘causing fear’ or ‘spreading false news’, and made these crimes punishable by up to 20 years in prison. It has also amended the *Code of Criminal Procedure* (1898) to make these offences non-bailable and subject to warrantless arrest.

Identification of suspected political opponents of the regime

3.59 According to in-country sources, as of 2023, the threshold for coming under official suspicion remained extremely low, and authorities made little distinction between those actively opposing the military regime and those merely expressing dissatisfaction with the regime or support for the opposition. In-country

sources told DFAT authorities were particularly sensitive to people providing financial or intelligence support to the armed resistance. Groups including young people, [ethnic minorities](#) and [healthcare workers](#) were especially likely to fall under suspicion. In-country sources told DFAT of credible reports of family members being held as hostages to coerce regime opponents into surrendering.

3.60 Authorities conduct random checks of phones at checkpoints and occasional door-to-door searches for dissidents, although in-country sources said they increasingly relied on informer networks and CCTV surveillance to identify suspected members of opposition groups. The same sources said [police](#) and the [military](#) kept lists of people wanted for political crimes on their phones, including photos, which they checked against people passing through checkpoints. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 it was possible to pay [bribes](#) of up to AUD 5,300 to have a name removed from these lists, although they also said this would likely be impossible for high-profile dissidents or anyone suspected of involvement with the armed resistance.

3.61 Authorities trace and arrest people who upload anti-regime posts on social media. Between February 2022 and the end of September 2023, a total of 1,306 were arrested on related charges. In May 2024, the regime intensified a ban on VPN software, heavily used in Myanmar to access restricted sites such as Facebook, Wikipedia and Google Maps. As part of random phone checks, police fine or arrest anyone found with a VPN.

Treatment of political opponents of the regime

3.62 Opponents of the regime ranging from senior political leaders to casual participants in street protests have been subjected to abuses including [arbitrary detention](#), [torture](#), sexual violence, doxing (the unauthorised release of private information) and online abuse, and [enforced disappearance](#). In 2022, NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced to 33 years in prison for a variety of charges, which her supporters said were politically motivated. Aung San Suu Kyi's sentence was later reduced to 27 years; she was under house arrest at the time of publication in 2025. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), a local human rights NGO, more than 27,000 people have been detained for political crimes since the coup in 2021. Some of those arrested have been sentenced to death, and in July 2022, the military regime began carrying out those sentences (see [Death Penalty](#)).

3.63 Political crimes are typically tried in special courts within [prisons](#), which are closed to the public. These closed trials do not meet international standards: prisoners have limited access to legal counsel and little or no opportunity to present a defence. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 conviction rates were almost 100 per cent, and the regime pressured judges to hand down the maximum sentence in all cases. In areas under martial law, up to 23 crimes including terrorism, treason and explosive offences are tried in military courts. These trials are reportedly summary in nature and often result in very harsh sentences, including the [death penalty](#), according to in-country sources (see also [Legal System](#)).

3.64 There are credible, widespread reports of political prisoners being [tortured](#) or mistreated in custody, including from the Associated Press (a news agency), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Federation of Journalists. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 torture remained common, especially at military interrogation centres. Also in 2023, in-country sources described reports of [enforced disappearance](#) and [extrajudicial killings](#) of detainees, which authorities later blamed on traffic accidents or failed escape attempts.

3.65 In-country sources told DFAT in 2022 some political prisoners had been released, although exact numbers were difficult to confirm. Released prisoners reportedly fall into two groups: those who have been pardoned and those released on an ad hoc basis. Detainees may seek a pardon by filing a request with authorities. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 detainees with connections to influential military figures who had no prior criminal record or connection to pro-democracy groups were more likely to be pardoned. Some detainees are made to sign a bond, the breach of which would trigger rearrest. Bond conditions vary but most prohibit joining protests or political movements, posting on social media, or 'destroying peace and tranquillity'.

3.66 DFAT assesses anyone opposing, or perceived as opposing, the military regime is at high risk of official discrimination and violence, including [arbitrary detention](#), [enforced disappearance](#), [torture](#), beatings, and [extrajudicial killings](#) or application of the [death penalty](#). Family members of regime opponents are also at high risk of official discrimination and violence, including being kidnapped and held hostage to coerce relatives into giving themselves up to authorities.

Politicians and Members of Political Parties

3.67 Political parties remain legal in Myanmar, but their ability to meet and organise has been greatly curtailed since the 2021 coup, and as at the time of publication in 2025, most registered political parties are regime-aligned. Leaders of parties opposed to the 2021 coup, especially the NLD, have been arrested or forced to flee the country. Rank-and-file members have been subjected to [arbitrary arrest](#), [torture](#) or [enforced disappearance](#), although in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 this was generally on the basis of their opposition to the regime rather than party membership per se.

3.68 The regime dissolved 40 political parties, including the NLD, in 2023, supposedly for failing to register under a new electoral law. In 2021, the SAC declared the NUG, National Unity Consultative Council, People's Defence Forces and Civil Disobedience Movement as 'terrorist organisations', which Senior General Min Aung Hlaing promised to 'annihilate'. According to in-country sources, some minor political parties have good relations with the military.

3.69 DFAT assesses members of opposition political parties including the NLD are at moderate risk of official violence and arbitrary detention on the basis of party affiliation. Party leaders, members of the NUG and members of the National Unity Consultative Council are at high risk of official violence and arbitrary detention.

Civil Disobedience Movement

3.70 Immediately after the 2021 coup, a widespread Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) emerged across the country, including rolling strikes, protests and office shutdowns. Initially led by doctors and other healthcare workers, it spread to include teachers, university lecturers, civil servants, public bank employees, railway workers and others. At its height, the CDM attracted more than 420,000 government employees. In 2023 around 200,000 were reportedly still participating in the CDM, including an estimated 130,000 teachers and 45,000 healthcare workers.

3.71 After the 2021 coup, the military regime warned CDM participants to return to work or face dismissal or suspension under the *Civil Services Personnel Law* (2013) on grounds of 'negligence' or 'unauthorised absence'. Some CDM participants, including about 1,000 railway workers, were evicted from public housing. CDM participants who remained on strike were publicly named in military-controlled media as being guilty of 'attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State'. Hundreds have since been arrested under Section 505A of the *Penal Code* (1861) and sentenced to up to three years in prison. Others have been beaten, tortured or killed by security forces.

3.72 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 authorities maintained lists of CDM participants, which they shared via social media apps such as Telegram. People exiting the country are checked against these lists and sometimes detained (see [Exit and Entry Procedures](#)). In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 it was possible to pay bribes of up to AUD 5,300 to have individuals' removed from these lists, although this would likely be impossible for high-profile CDM participants or anyone suspected of involvement with the armed resistance. Many CDM participants have gone into hiding or fled, either to neighbouring countries, rural areas, or areas

controlled by [EAOs](#). While some have found work or receive a small living allowance, many are struggling to meet daily expenses.

3.73 DFAT assesses CDM participants are at high risk of official discrimination in the form of job losses, property seizures, threats and [arbitrary arrest](#). CDM participants are at high risk of violence in the form of [extrajudicial killings](#), [torture](#) and mistreatment in custody. Family members of CDM participants face similar high risks of official discrimination and violence. For risks against civil servants and others who are unable or unwilling to participate in CDM, see [Collaborators and Informants, Actual or Perceived](#).

Defectors and Deserters

3.74 In-country sources told DFAT an estimated 14,000 [police](#) and [soldiers](#) had defected or deserted from the Myanmar security forces since the 2021 coup. Many defectors and deserters reportedly leave based on opposition to the 2021 coup or because they refuse to participate in the killing of unarmed civilians. Some of them have joined opposition armed groups or [EAOs](#) (defectors) while others have sought to evade authorities and start a new life in EAO-controlled areas or overseas (deserters). While most are from the enlisted and junior officer ranks, senior officers including lieutenant colonels have also defected.

3.75 A number of organisations exist to facilitate defections/desertions, including People's Embrace, People's Soldiers and People's Goal. These organisations work through social media to crowdsource funding, encourage and vet defectors/deserters, and assist them to leave their post and travel to rebel-held areas. Once the defector/deserter is in a safe area, these organisations provide them accommodation, food and, in some cases, money. Some deserters then travel on to neighbouring countries or overseas. In March 2022, Australian media reported some former Myanmar military soldiers had been granted asylum in Australia. These reports were subsequently reported in Myanmar media.

3.76 According to in-country sources, leaving the [military](#) is difficult, as soldiers and their families often live on military bases, where their lives and finances are tightly controlled. Authorities maintain lists of deserters and actively work to apprehend them. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 if captured, officers would likely be imprisoned, while enlisted [soldiers](#) and [police](#) would likely be shot. In-country sources also said family members left behind by deserters and defectors were sometimes at risk of reprisals or being detained as hostages.

3.77 In March 2022, *Frontier Myanmar*, an online newspaper, reported a channel on Telegram was offering bounties of AUD 380–530 for the assassination of 'watermelon' [soldiers](#) (so called for their green uniforms and 'red' revolutionary sympathies) and [police](#) who criticised the regime. Dissident soldiers and police have also been subject to doxing and online harassment.

3.78 DFAT assesses defectors and deserters face a high risk of official discrimination in the form of arrest, and a high risk of societal discrimination in the form of online harassment and doxing. They face a high risk of official violence in the form of [extrajudicial killings](#) and executions, on the basis of their refusal to participate in illegal killings and opposition to the military regime. Family members of defectors/deserters face similar high risks.

Conscription and Forcible Recruitment

3.79 On 10 February 2024, the military regime announced it would begin enforcing the *People's Military Service Law* (2010), which was passed (but never enforced) under the military government of Thein Sein in 2010. The law allows for men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-27 to be drafted into the armed forces for two years. Men aged 18-45 and women aged 18-35 who are classified as 'experts', such as medical doctors and

engineers, can be drafted for three years. Exemptions exist for married women and mothers, [clergy](#), people with disabilities, the medically unfit, and people exempted by the Central Drafting Board. On 23 January 2025, the regime introduced by-laws (*National Service Rules*) to assist the implementation of the *People's Military Service Law*. Of note, the rules ban overseas travel without permission for those who have received drafting orders or are awaiting an exemption. If a person summoned to register for conscription is absent, the rules require authorities to visit the absent person's family and investigate.

3.80 According to international media reports in 2024, Myanmar's [military](#) estimated about 14 million people were eligible for military service. Since the announcement, many young people have reportedly fled to Thailand to avoid being conscripted. Evading conscription is punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine.

3.81 In April 2024, the Associated Press reported the military was forcibly recruiting [Rohingya](#) in Rakhine State and cited an NUG spokesperson statement that this was an attempt to incite ethnic hatred between the Rohingya and the ethnic Rakhine-dominated Arakan Army.

3.82 Even before the *People's Military Service Law* (2010) was enforced in 2024, in-country sources told DFAT there was forcible recruitment by the military regime of young people of both sexes for non-combat and (for men) combat roles. In some instances, in-country sources said young people had been arrested at checkpoints and offered a choice of paying a 150,000 kyat (AUD 110) bribe or enlistment.

3.83 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 the military sometimes recruited common criminals or prisoners in exchange for waiving their sentences. DFAT is also aware of unconfirmed reports of underage recruiting by the military regime in Rakhine in 2024. While DFAT was unable to independently verify these claims as at the time of publication in 2025, it considers them credible. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 survival rates for forcibly recruited soldiers were low and that they were often used as 'cannon fodder' in frontline combat.

3.84 [EAOs](#) including the TNLA, MNDAA and AA also forcibly recruit in areas they control. For example, there were reports of forced recruitment by the MNDAA in northern Shan State in December 2023, and the TNLA announced conscription for all men of Ta'ang ethnicity aged 16-35 in February 2024. Many EAOs recruit both men and women for combat roles, and DFAT is aware of reports of underage recruitment by some EAOs, including the TNLA and MNDAA.

3.85 DFAT assesses people liable for compulsory military service with regime forces or EAOs are at high risk of being called up. If drafted, they face a high risk of being deployed in combat.

Regime Collaborators and Informants (Actual or Perceived)

3.86 Civilians perceived as collaborating with, or being informants for, the [military](#) regime have been targeted by bomb, arson and shooting attacks by [PDFs](#) and others. Ward administrators (low-ranking civilian officials who work for the regime) have been particularly targeted, in part due to their role in identifying opponents of the regime. According to OHCHR, between February 2021 and January 2023, over 127 local administrators were killed nationwide. Many ward administrators have resigned as a result. Since the implementation of conscription in February 2024, regime-affiliated local administrators involved in conscription have been targeted. At the time of publication, more than 80 have reportedly been assassinated.

3.87 Government employees who are unable or unwilling to participate in [CDM](#) have been subjected to harassment and threats by opposition groups, even in cases where they have continued their employment under duress. In January 2023, the NUG released a document proposing punishment for these civil servants if the NUG were to take power, including demotions, dismissals, travel bans and blacklisting. The proposal attracted domestic controversy, including on the grounds it risked emulating tactics adopted by the junta.

3.88 Opposition groups have targeted business owners who have had, or were perceived as having had, dealings with the [military](#), as well as members of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Family members of regime supporters, including children as young as 12, have been killed during these attacks. Opposition groups have also targeted so-called collaborators and their families for ‘social punishment’, a controversial tactic that includes online abuse, doxing and fake pornography.

3.89 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 business owners and others often found themselves ‘trapped’ between appeasing the regime and avoiding reprisals from [PDFs](#). There have been cases of civilians and their families being threatened or killed by opposition armed [groups](#), despite a lack of evidence they were collaborating with the regime. In 2021, the NUG released a code of conduct for PDFs fighting the regime to reduce the risk of [illegal killings](#) and other breaches of human rights, although it remains unclear how well this is enforced or respected by different groups.

3.90 DFAT assesses perceived regime collaborators and informants and their families face a moderate risk of societal discrimination in the form of ‘social punishment’ and moderate risk of violence in the form of death threats and [extrajudicial killings](#). Ward administrators are at high risk of societal discrimination and violence.

NGOs, Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders

3.91 The operating environment for civil society organisations (CSOs) and NGOs in Myanmar is extremely difficult. CSOs are governed under the *Organisation Registration Law* (2022), which replaced the *Association Registration Law* (2014). The new law increases reporting and compliance requirements, requires all NGOs to register with the government, and imposes fines and prison sentences for failure to do so. It also imposes restrictions on where NGOs can operate, requires INGOs to be governed by an executive committee with 40 per cent Myanmar nationals, and forbids all NGOs from conducting activities related to [religion](#), [politics](#) or [economics](#).

3.92 CSOs and INGOs operating in Myanmar have adopted a range of strategies to deal with these restrictions. Following the 2021 coup, some NGOs aligned themselves with the protest movement, participated in demonstrations and provided support to the CDM; some have attempted to operate ‘under the radar’ of the regime; and some have ceased operations and/or fled the country. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 despite the risks of legal action, some NGOs preferred not to register with the government, to avoid association with the military regime.

3.93 Following the 2021 coup, authorities raided the offices of numerous NGOs, seizing computers, documents and financial records, and in some cases arrested workers. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 the military regime continued to closely monitor NGOs, and required them to frequently report to local authorities and provide details about their funding sources and finances. Raids have reportedly become less common, but still occur: one prominent local NGO was raided in Kachin state in late 2023, and authorities seized documents and questioned staff about their activities. As at the time of publication in 2025, NGOs working on sectors the regime considered sensitive, such as human rights, peacebuilding and [women’s rights](#), were especially likely to come under scrutiny.

3.94 Since the 2021 coup, human rights defenders have been harassed, [arbitrarily detained](#) and subjected to [extrajudicial killing](#) by the regime. In March 2021, Ah Khu, director of the civil society group Women for Justice, was shot dead by regime forces during a protest in Sagaing. In April 2021, Thin Thin Aung, co-founder of Women for Justice and a leading member of the Women’s League of Burma, was arrested in Yangon. In January 2022, Pu Tui Dim, a member of the Chin Human Rights Organisation, was killed by unknown assailants along with nine other people in north-western Chin State. In July 2022, the junta executed four men involved in anti-coup activities, including two prominent pro-democracy activists (see also [Death Penalty](#)).

3.95 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 humanitarian and development service providers working outside sectors considered ‘sensitive’ to the regime ‘were less likely to be targeted by the regime’. Nevertheless, some humanitarian workers have been killed by security forces. In December 2021, two local employees of Save the Children were forced from their cars and killed in Kayah State, as part of a massacre of 35 civilians by Myanmar military soldiers. DFAT was not aware of any further killings of humanitarian workers as at the time of publication in 2025.

3.96 DFAT assesses local CSO, NGO and INGO workers, human rights defenders and civil society actors face a moderate risk of official discrimination and violence, including [arbitrary detention](#), harassment and [extrajudicial killings](#). These risks are higher for those working on issues or in regions deemed sensitive by the regime, including human rights, peacebuilding and [women’s rights](#). Civil society actors who criticise the regime face similar risks to other members of the [political opposition](#).

Journalists and Media

3.97 Under Chapter VIII, Article 354(a) of the 2008 Constitution, Myanmar citizens have the right ‘to express and publish freely their convictions and opinions’, where such expression is not ‘contrary to the laws, enacted for Union security, prevalence of law and order, community peace and tranquillity or public order and morality’. In practice, freedom of the press was limited in Myanmar before the 2021 coup and has seriously deteriorated in the years since.

3.98 Myanmar ranked 171 out of 180 countries in the 2024 *World Press Freedom Index*, down 31 places from its pre-coup ranking of 140 in 2021. According to Reporters Without Borders, which publishes the *World Press Freedom Index*, the military regime had imprisoned more than 150 media workers and summarily killed seven journalists since February 2022. In-country sources told DFAT a journalist was killed in the course of an artillery attack against an IDP camp, which he had fled to while escaping military raids in 2022.

3.99 Following the 2021 coup, the regime closed media outlets, raided newsrooms and arrested journalists. On 8 March 2021, the Ministry of Information revoked the licences of local media outlets including *Myanmar Now*, *Democratic Voice of Burma*, *Mizzima* and *Khit Thit Media*. They also revoked the licences of a number of radio broadcasters and other outlets in regional areas. Soldiers and police beat and arrested journalists covering the 2021 anti-coup protests and there are credible reports of journalists being tortured in custody resulting in long-term physical and psychological trauma. As a result, hundreds of journalists have fled the country. Media outlets such as *Myanmar Now*, *The Irrawaddy* and *Mizzima* now operate from overseas, often with the assistance of sources in Myanmar who operate at high risk to their own safety. These overseas-based ‘journalists-in-exile’ often rely on donations and the support of family to continue working, since revenue streams for opposition media have largely dried up. Journalists-in-exile who work in Thailand without appropriate work rights are at risk of arrest and deportation as illegal immigrants.

3.100 According to in-country sources, the regime actively monitors the online activity of journalists, bloggers and ordinary citizens for anti-regime comments, posts and ‘likes’. Social media users who have criticised the regime online have been arrested and charged under laws such as 505A and the *Counter-Terrorism Law* (2014). Like other forms of political expression, the threshold for falling under official suspicion for online expression is extremely low, and even small acts of dissent have attracted serious penalties. For example, people, including celebrities and journalists, were arrested in April 2023 after changing their Facebook profiles to black in protest against a deadly airstrike in Sagaing.

3.101 Sources have told DFAT journalists self-censor to avoid scrutiny (by both pro- and anti-regime groups) and been pressured to publish stories supportive of certain groups. Journalists who work in-country for pro-military outlets are generally able to report on non-sensitive topics provided they self-censor and refrain from criticising the security forces or the military regime. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 independent

journalists were sometimes pressured to publish positive news stories about the resistance, or criticised for publishing stories that supposedly disclosed sensitive information about resistance activities. DFAT is unaware of violence being used by EAOs to enforce desirable reporting of their activities.

3.102 The regime published a new cybersecurity law in January 2025 that has been criticised by civil society for providing a legal framework for the regime's restrictions on freedom of expression. The law criminalises using computer programs, software or electronic information in an 'improper manner', and the electronic distribution of 'inappropriate information.'

3.103 DFAT assesses independent journalists in Myanmar face a high risk of official discrimination in the form of censorship and harassment. Journalists who report on issues considered sensitive by the regime, especially criticism of security forces, face a high risk of [arbitrary detention](#) and a moderate risk of violence. People who post, comment on or 'like' material online criticising the military regime or expressing support for the opposition face a moderate risk of official discrimination, in the form of harassment and arbitrary arrest, and a moderate risk of violence. Social media is monitored closely by the authorities, and even minor online criticism is likely to result in legal trouble or harassment for the person posting it.

GROUPS OF INTEREST

Women

3.104 Section 348 of the 2008 Constitution prohibits state discrimination against any Myanmar citizen on the basis of sex. Sections 349-351 prescribe equal pay and conditions for women doing the same work as men and equal rights for mothers and pregnant women. Section 352 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in the public service, although it also says 'nothing in this Section shall prevent appointment of men to the positions that are suitable for men only'. In practice, there are few other legal protections for women in Myanmar, and those that exist are ineffective in practice.

3.105 There is no law against rape within marriage, and progress on a draft law against gender-based violence (GBV), under development since 2012, stalled following the 2021 coup and has not progressed since. The age of consent is 14. According to Section 375(4) of the *Penal Code* (1861), a man who has sex with a girl younger than 14 is guilty of rape. Despite being illegal under the *Child Rights Law* (2019), child marriage still occurs in Myanmar (see [Children](#)).

3.106 In some parts of the country, customary laws discriminate against women in matters such as sexual assault, divorce and inheritance (see [Legal System](#)). Under the *Chin Special Division Act* (1948), divorced women are routinely denied custody of their children and access to shared property from the marriage. Rape in Chin State is often dealt with under customary law, and perpetrators have escaped punishment by apologising and paying fines as small as AUD 7.50. Similar laws and practices exist in Kachin and Rakhine states. DFAT is aware of cases in Rakhine State where men who raped underage girls have escaped charges by marrying the girls they raped.

Gender-based violence

3.107 According to the 2015-16 *Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey*, one in five women in Myanmar under the age of 49 experiences intimate partner violence in her lifetime. Data on GBV in Myanmar is scarce, and actual rates are likely to be higher. Anecdotal evidence suggests the prevalence of GBV increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and following the 2021 coup, including due to movement restrictions, depressed

economic opportunities for women, an increase in male unemployment, and an increase in security operations by the security forces.

3.108 Barriers to justice for GBV survivors include a lack of relevant laws, official indifference and lack of capacity, and cultural attitudes that stigmatise and disempower victims. Even prior to the 2021 coup, women did not commonly report GBV or rape due to stigma and lack of faith in the state protection system. The 2015-16 *Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey* found over 90 per cent of 15 to 19-year old girls who had experienced physical or sexual violence did not seek help. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 since the 2021 coup, victims ‘never’ reported GBV to police and that police would not do anything about it if they did.

3.109 The availability of GBV support services such as shelters, healthcare and legal aid has seriously deteriorated since the 2021 coup, as many NGOs working in the sector have fled the country or gone underground, and their funding has ceased. Organisations such as the Women’s League of Burma continue to run mobile shelters in some parts of Myanmar, but there are limited places, and women are forced to move frequently between shelters due to regime inspections. Prior to the 2021 coup, the Department of Social Welfare offered GBV support services, but in-country sources told DFAT women would no longer use them due to the department’s association with the military regime. Some EAOs including the KNU and Karenni Independence Organisation (KIO) offer support services for women, including for GBV, but these are not available in all areas under their control.

3.110 The Myanmar military has long been accused of GBV and using rape as a weapon of war. Human Rights Watch reported ‘dozens or sometimes hundreds’ of rapes by regime soldiers against the Rohingya in Rakhine State in 2017, and actual figures were likely much higher. In 2021, Myanmar was listed by the UN Secretary General as being ‘credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict’. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 regime soldiers continued to commit rape with impunity in conflict zones. Details are scarce, but one NGO recorded 20 reports of rapes by regime forces in Sagaing between January 2022 and April 2023.

3.111 Resistance forces, including EAOs and PDFs, have been accused of sexual assault, including against alleged collaborators and informants and female recruits. In August 2022, local media reported four women and girls aged 15–20 were raped and killed by members of an NUG-affiliated militia after being found in a village abandoned following a military raid. According to local media reports, the perpetrators were briefly detained by the NUG and then released. The NUG has released a code of conduct for PDFs banning sexual violence and other human rights abuses, but in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 this ban was sometimes ignored.

3.112 There are widespread reports that women detained by security forces for opposing the regime since the 2021 coup have been subjected to sexualised threats and sexual harassment, and in some cases to sexual assault, rape and torture. In-country sources told DFAT rape in particular was often underreported due to stigma and because victims ‘don’t want to retraumatise themselves’. The same sources told DFAT female political prisoners were especially vulnerable to sexual assault while being held in military interrogation centres and being moved between locations. Women who experience sexual violence in detention often experience long-term physical and psychological trauma as a result.

3.113 DFAT assesses women in Myanmar are at moderate risk of societal discrimination and moderate risk of official discrimination, based on their gender, in the form of inadequate state and social protection from GBV. Female political prisoners are at high risk of sexual harassment and moderate risk of sexual violence and rape. Women in conflict zones face a moderate risk of sexual violence where they come into contact with security forces or armed groups. Women throughout Myanmar face a moderate risk of GBV, particularly domestic violence.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Legal framework

3.114 Section 377 of the *Penal Code* (1861) criminalises sex between men as ‘carnal intercourse against the order of nature’ and provides for penalties of up to 10 years in prison. A 2020 report by ILGA Asia, an LGBTQIA+ rights organisations, recorded more than 17 arrests in Mandalay under Section 377 of the *Penal Code* (1861), and as many as 50 in other areas including Yangon over an unspecified period. Transgender people can also be prosecuted under Sections 35(c) and 35(d) of the *Police Act* (1945), which criminalise a person ‘having his face covered or otherwise disguised’ or ‘being within the precincts of any dwelling-house... without being able to give a satisfactory account of himself’ on the grounds they have ‘disguised’ themselves as a member of the opposite sex. While the exact number of prosecutions was uncertain at the time of publication in 2025, these laws are being enforced.

3.115 Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar authorities have prioritised prosecuting political crimes over all other activities, including the enforcement of anti-LGBTQIA+ laws. Nevertheless, in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that LGBTQIA+ people in general, and trans women and ‘effeminate gay men’ in particular, continued to face harassment, extortion and sexual violence at the hands of authorities, particularly when passing through checkpoints in contested areas such as Magway and Sagaing.

Societal and familial attitudes

3.116 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ people in Myanmar were becoming more tolerant, especially among younger people. Nevertheless, Myanmar society remains generally conservative, and there is little space for openly expressing LGBTQIA+ identities. A 2020 survey by NGOs &PROUD and Colours Rainbow reported while the majority of people agreed LGBTQIA+ people deserved equality and supported decriminalising LGBTQIA+ behaviours, more than half of respondents said they could not accept a child, sibling or politician who was LGBTQIA+. Respondents stated in the same survey they were more likely to accept a transgender man or woman than a gay man or lesbian woman. In-country sources reported trans women were among the most vulnerable groups in Myanmar due to their visibility.

3.117 In-country sources told DFAT in 2022 the Myanmar military was a homophobic institution, which viewed homosexuality as evidence of ‘foreign corruption’. In 2019, a prominent Buddhist monk mocked a gay librarian who died by suicide after experiencing homophobic bullying, and called on his religious followers to ‘beat [LGBTQIA+ people] to death’. Also in 2019, another Buddhist monk criticised foreign governments that legalised gay marriage and asked why they promoted the human rights of ‘useless people’. According to in-country sources, the political opposition is ostensibly more inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people, and in May 2021, the NUG announced Aung Myo Min, an openly gay man and LGBTQIA+ advocate, as Minister for Human Rights in its government-in-hiding. Nevertheless, in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that LGBTQIA+ people had been ‘bullied’ within the anti-coup protest movement and within armed opposition groups.

3.118 LGBTQIA+ people who come out to their families often face rejection and familial violence. Bullying of LGBTQIA+ people is common in schools and universities, and many LGBTQIA+ people drop out of education as a result. According to a 2021 survey by &PROUD, 42 per cent of LGBTQIA+ people in Myanmar had self-harmed, and 29 per cent had attempted suicide. According to in-country sources, LGBTQIA+ people often experience discrimination in employment outside of stereotypical occupations such as the beauty industry or fortune-telling. In-country sources told DFAT in 2022 that LGBTQIA+ people in Myanmar also sometimes experienced discrimination when seeking healthcare.

3.119 According to in-country sources, the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people in Myanmar tend to be similar regardless of socioeconomic status or urban/rural divides, although they also said wealthier LGBTQIA+ people

were more likely to be able to leave abusive family situations and city-dwellers had a degree of anonymity impossible to those rural villages. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 many LGBTQIA+ people in Myanmar kept their identity and relationships secret to avoid discrimination and harassment.

Treatment of LGBTQIA+ members of the political opposition

3.120 LGBTQIA+ activists were prominent in anti-coup protests in 2021 and targeted for [detention](#) and violence during the subsequent crackdown. According to a June 2021 situation report by the NUG, 12 LGBTQIA+ people were killed and 73 arrested during [anti-protest operations](#) by the regime. Along with other members of [civil society](#), LGBTQIA+ activists have faced ongoing legal action and violence for opposing the regime since the 2021 coup. For instance, in June 2023, Justin Min Hein, president of the LGBTQ Union in Mandalay, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for violating the *Anti-Terrorism Act* (2023).

3.121 In 2023, in-country sources told DFAT that LGBTQIA+ people in general, and trans women and 'effeminate' men in particular, faced severe and disproportionate mistreatment in [detention](#), including [torture](#) and inhuman treatment, sexual violence and sexual harassment. In 2021, a trans woman protester reported being held by interrogators for 12 hours and subjected to sexual violence including being raped with bottles and having her nipples burned with cigarettes. LGBTQIA+ people who fled to neighbouring countries remained highly vulnerable to exploitation and sexual abuse, on the combined basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and their irregular migration status (see the [DFAT Country Information Report on Thailand](#)).

3.122 DFAT assesses LGBTQIA+ people in Myanmar are at moderate risk of official discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity, in the form of arrest or extortion by police. LGBTQIA+ people are at moderate risk of societal discrimination in employment, [healthcare](#) and family life. LGBTQIA+ people are at moderate risk of violence from peers or family members. LGBTQIA+ people involved in the political opposition are at high risk of violence and official discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, in addition to their [political opinion](#).

People with Disabilities

3.123 The *Rights of the Persons with Disabilities Law* (2015) states people with disabilities 'enjoy the human rights and fundamental freedoms of citizens on an equal basis with others'. It affords people with disabilities access to [education](#), housing and rehabilitation, sets quotas for their [employment](#), and prescribes fines and prison sentences for people who violate their rights. Nevertheless, in practice, people with disabilities in Myanmar face numerous challenges, and their situation has worsened since the 2021 coup.

3.124 According to 2024 UN estimates, around 6 million people, or roughly 12 per cent of the population of Myanmar, are people with disabilities. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 the number of people with disabilities was rising, especially the number of people with newly acquired disabilities due to air strikes, landmines and armed conflict.

3.125 In-country sources told DFAT access to support services and the ability to engage in everyday life for people with disabilities had been greatly curtailed since the 2021 coup, including by family members concerned for their safety. People with intellectual disabilities have been arrested for failure to comply with SAC orders. People with lifelong visible disabilities, such as missing limbs, sometimes face harassment at checkpoints by officials who suspect them of losing their limbs in recent anti-regime fighting.

3.126 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 where official disability policies existed, they tended to emphasise charity rather than empowerment, including the policies of the NUG. Employment discrimination is common, and even NGOs that exist to support people with disabilities rarely employ them. Poor [economic](#)

[conditions](#) have also affected work opportunities for people with disabilities, as they have been forced to compete with more able-bodied people for a shrinking number of jobs.

3.127 Limited support is available for people with disabilities in SAC-controlled areas and some EAO-controlled areas. A small number of NGO-run schools for the deaf operate in Mandalay and Yangon. In-country sources told DFAT rehabilitation services, disability aids and prosthetics were scarce throughout the country. The same in-country sources said the SAC provided irregular payments of 30,000 kyat (AUD 22) to a very small number of people with disabilities, although many people with disabilities were afraid to register for these payments due to their association with the military regime. They said the NUG and some EAOs also provided similar irregular payments of 30,000-50,000 kyat (AUD 22-36) to small numbers of people with disabilities in areas they controlled.

3.128 According to in-country sources, societal attitudes towards people with disabilities are mixed. While communities are generally sympathetic towards Deaf people, for instance, they are less tolerant of people with disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), which is not well understood in Myanmar. Some people ascribe supernatural meaning to disabilities, for instance blaming them on misdeeds committed in a previous life or to spirit possession. According to in-country sources, some Shan communities hold superstitions against children born with cleft lips.

3.129 Families occasionally hide children with disabilities from view, either out of stigma or for what is perceived to be their own protection from conflict and abusers. There are isolated reports of shackling of people with disabilities in Shan State, again for what is perceived to be their own protection. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 sexual exploitation and abuse of people with disabilities was common, primarily Deaf people and people with intellectual disabilities, especially if they were young girls.

3.130 DFAT assesses people with disabilities face significant barriers to full participation in society, including a lack of inclusive [education](#) and employment opportunities, and inadequate state support and protection. People with disabilities generally face a low risk of societal discrimination and a moderate risk of official discrimination, including in the form of harassment at checkpoints; however, people with less-understood conditions, like autism spectrum disorder, face a moderate risk of societal discrimination. DFAT assesses Deaf people and people with intellectual disabilities face a moderate risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, especially young girls (see also [Women](#); [Children and Young People](#)).

Children and Young People

3.131 The *Child Rights Law* (2019) defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. The law sets out the obligations of state and non-state actors to protect children, including against physical and sexual violence, recruitment in [armed conflict](#), neglect, exploitation, [abduction](#) and [arbitrary detention](#). The *Child Rights Law* (2019) is ineffective in practice, and since the 2021 coup, there have been widespread reports of serious human rights violations and abuses against children, both by the [military](#) regime and various [non-state actors](#).

3.132 Since February 2021, the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict recorded 280 cases of recruitment and use of children, 170 cases of killing or maiming of children, and a small number of cases of child abduction and sexual violence against children. There are well-documented reports of the Myanmar military using children as human shields and human mine detectors, and of the recruitment and use of children by EAOs. There were reports of underage recruitment by the military in Rakhine State in 2023; while DFAT was unable to verify these reports at the time of publication, it considers them credible. Children have also been killed and maimed by PDF attacks on regime officials and supporters (see also [Political Opinion](#)).

3.133 Many children and young people were involved in the [anti-coup protests](#) of 2021, both as bystanders and active participants. In June 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar stated since the 2021 coup, 1,400 children had been [arbitrarily detained](#). In-country sources told DFAT in 2022 many children were held in Insein prison, an adult prison in Yangon with limited capacity for juveniles. In some cases, children were held alongside adults. Following the 2021 coup, there were widespread reports of children being held as hostages to coerce relatives into giving themselves up to authorities, although in-country sources told DFAT this practice had become less common by the end of 2023.

3.134 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 because large numbers of young people were involved in the [protest movement](#) and armed opposition, they had been a specific focus of regime surveillance and repression. In-country sources cited cases where authorities rounded up young people at random following [PDF](#) attacks. There were also examples of hate-speech directed at young people by pro-government social media users online, which described them as ‘GZ (Generation Z) terrorists’ or ‘Taliban GZ’. Young people in [detention](#) for political crimes in Myanmar are at risk of [torture](#) and sexual violence (see also [Political Opinion](#)).

3.135 Under the *Child Rights Law* (2019), the minimum age for marriage is 18. Nevertheless, child marriage occurs in Myanmar, particularly in rural areas. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 child marriage had become more common since the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 coup, especially in areas affected by conflict, including Chin, Kayah, Kayah, Shan and Rakhine States, as families sought security for young people out of work and [education](#). Child marriage affects both sexes, although the negative impacts on education and economic empowerment are more likely to be felt by girls (see also [Women](#)). Human trafficking, child labour, and sexual exploitation of children are also problems, especially in border areas (see also [Human Trafficking](#)).

3.136 DFAT assesses young people, including teenagers, face a moderate risk of official discrimination, in the form of harassment and [arbitrary detention](#), and a low risk of societal discrimination, in the form of online hate speech, on the basis of their age and presumed association with the resistance movement, regardless of their actual involvement. Children of opponents of the regime face a moderate risk of official harassment and arbitrary detention, including as hostages, but this is generally on the basis of their parents’ political affiliation, rather than their age alone (see also [Political Opinion](#)).

4. COMPLEMENTARY PROTECTION CLAIMS

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

Extrajudicial Killings

4.1 There are widespread reports of extrajudicial killings being carried out by security forces in Myanmar, including [military](#), [police](#) and Pyu Saw Htee (government-backed militia), as well as by [other armed groups](#) active throughout the country. Before the 2021 coup, extrajudicial killings were concentrated in areas of active conflict, but since the coup, they have been reported throughout the country.

4.2 According to a March 2024 report by Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica, a human rights organisation, regime forces had killed more than 2,000 unarmed civilians in over 200 'massacres' (killings of more than five people) since the 2021 coup. There are also widespread reports of illegal killings by regime forces of individuals including protesters, medical personnel, [CDM](#) participants, and civilians in conflict zones, especially those suspected of harbouring or supporting militants. For information about extrajudicial killings by authorities of prisoners in custody, see [Deaths in Custody](#).

4.3 [EAOs](#) and [PDFs](#) have carried out extrajudicial killings in the form of targeted assassinations of regime officials, USDP members and supporters of the military regime, as well as their family members. They have also killed perceived collaborators and informants, sometimes despite limited or no evidence that they were cooperating with the regime (see [Collaborators and Informants](#)).

Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

4.4 Enforced disappearances occurred in Myanmar before the 2021 coup, especially in Rakhine State and other conflict-affected areas, where they were primarily carried out by security forces, but also by [EAOs](#) and criminal gangs. Since the 2021 coup, enforced disappearances have greatly increased and spread throughout the country.

4.5 In August 2021, the AAPP released a statement which reported that 82 per cent of political prisoners, or around 5,000 people, were being held in unknown locations in Myanmar. This number has likely increased since. A November 2023 report by the Karen Human Rights Group Sources recorded more than 150 cases of enforced disappearances, predominantly of men aged 15-25 years old, in southeast Myanmar since the 2021 coup. Enforced disappearances have been carried out by [police](#), [military](#), government-backed militias and [non-state groups](#).

4.6 Family members are often not informed when their relatives are arrested and often have no idea of their whereabouts or whether they are dead or alive until they are released, found dead, or appear for trial. Young men and boys in particular are targeted for enforced disappearance, but men and women of any age are at risk. Victims of enforced disappearance have been subjected to [torture](#) and [extrajudicial killings](#).

Deaths in Custody

4.7 According to AAPP data from March 2024, almost 1,700 people had died in regime custody ‘through force or neglect’ since the 2021 coup. The AAPP reported many people in regime custody died under [torture](#) within 24 hours of arrest, and others died later in prison due to lack of medical treatment.

4.8 There are widespread reports of the intentional killings of detainees by authorities, particularly while being transported between places of [detention](#). Authorities often blame these killings on traffic accidents or escape attempts. In July 2023, the AAPP released details of 37 political prisoners it reported had been murdered or disappeared from custody in June 2023. In-country sources told DFAT summary executions had occurred in Myanmar prisons in 2023, which authorities again blamed on escape attempts, but which witnesses described as appearing as if the victims had been lined up and shot at close range.

DEATH PENALTY

4.9 The death penalty is a legal punishment in Myanmar for crimes that result in death, offences against the state, drug trafficking, military crimes and terrorism. The death penalty is mandatory in cases involving murder, drug trafficking and drug possession. Death sentences were fairly rare before the 2021 coup, and the death penalty was not carried out between 1976 and 2022. Following the 2021 coup, the number of death sentences greatly increased: according to the AAPP, 176 people were sentenced to death between February 2021 and January 2024.

4.10 In July 2022, the military regime carried out the first judicial executions in Myanmar in more than four decades. The executed prisoners were two prominent [pro-democracy activists](#) and two men convicted of killing an alleged regime [informant](#). The executions attracted international condemnation. DFAT was not aware of any further executions in Myanmar as at the time of publication in 2025.

4.11 Courts continue to impose the death penalty under Article 368 of the *Code of Criminal Procedure* (1898) and under *Martial Law Order 3/2021*, which allows civilians to be tried by military courts for a wide range of offences, including those that attract the death penalty. People who receive the death penalty from district courts can appeal their sentences in higher courts, but those sentenced by military courts have no right of appeal. In May 2023 and April 2024, the MNDAA carried out public executions in its controlled territory. The executed men (total of seven) were a mix of MNDAA soldiers and local people accused of kidnapping and murder.

TORTURE

4.12 There are widespread reports of the use of physical and psychological torture by Myanmar security forces, including beatings, stress positions, burning, mutilation, electric shocks, mock executions, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sleep deprivation, and denial of food, water and medicine. Other types of reported mistreatment include threats and verbal abuse, being made to strip naked, and being forced to drink from a toilet bowl.

4.13 Before the 2021 coup, torture was more common in [areas affected by ethnic conflict](#). The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar reported in March 2021 torture and ill-treatment were documented in the ‘overwhelming majority of cases of [arbitrary detention](#)’ in Rakhine and Chin states. Since the 2021 coup, torture has been reported throughout Myanmar, especially against political prisoners and suspected members of [PDFs and ethnic armed groups](#). Torture is common in places of detention, in particular military interrogation centres, but also [prisons](#), police stations and military bases. Bodies of people who have been [forcibly disappeared](#) often show signs of torture.

4.14 Myanmar is not signatory to *the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, and torture is not criminalised as a separate or special offence. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 torture was encouraged by a culture of impunity for security forces. DFAT is not aware of cases of torture carried out by PDFs or EAOs, but there are reports of other abuses by these groups, including sexual violence and extrajudicial killings. Government-backed militias (Pyu Saw Htee) are also known to use torture.

Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

4.15 According to the AAPP, over 27,000 people have been arrested, charged or sentenced for political crimes since the 2021 coup, most under Section 505A of the *Penal Code* (1861), as well as under the *Counter-Terrorism Law* (2014) (see also Political Opinion). More than 20,000 people remain in detention; many are held for weeks or even months before they are charged. Most detainees cannot afford legal representation, and while some lawyers will take clients *pro bono*, there are not enough lawyers to meet demand. In-country sources told DFAT in 2024 authorities often interfered in the ability of lawyers to defend their clients and most accused did not see their lawyer until the day of their trial.

4.16 There are widespread reports of torture and mistreatment of political detainees, especially in military interrogation centres. If security forces cannot locate a person of interest, they sometimes detain family members in their place, including elderly parents, to coerce the person into giving themselves up. In January 2024, the regime announced it had pardoned and would release over 9,000 prisoners from Myanmar prisons. At the time, Human Rights Watch reported most of those scheduled for pardon and release were common criminals and foreign prisoners, rather than political prisoners.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

STATE PROTECTION

Military

5.1 The Myanmar military consists of three branches: army, navy and air force. The military has been the dominant national institution since independence; it has staged several coups since 1962 and has ruled Myanmar for much of that time. According to the 2024 *Global Firepower Index*, Myanmar has the fifth largest military in Southeast Asia, with an estimated 150,000 active duty personnel. The estimated size of the Myanmar military has reduced significantly in recent years, in part correcting previous exaggerations, but also due to record low levels of recruitment, as well as disease, [desertions](#), deaths in combat, surrenders, resignations and retirements.

5.2 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 the Myanmar military lacked professionalism at an institutional level, as demonstrated by its unrestrained use of violence against civilians. Before and since the 2021 coup, regime soldiers have been accused of human rights violations including [extrajudicial killings](#), [torture](#), rape and other forms of sexual violence, arson, indiscriminate shelling and aerial attacks, and laying landmines in civilian areas. Human rights violations are systemic: a 2023 study by *Security Force Monitor* found more than 60 per cent of senior Myanmar military commanders had serious human rights violations committed by units under their command. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 so-called 'Ogre Columns', mixed columns of light infantry responsible for search-and-destroy missions in rebel-held territory, were particularly notorious for human rights violations and indiscriminate killings.

5.3 The Myanmar military's actions during and since the 2021 coup have greatly lowered its morale and prestige in the eyes of the population. As a result, the military has struggled to meet recruiting targets for officers and enlisted soldiers. Applications for the National Defence College dropped from 2,500 per year before the 2021 coup to around 400 in 2023. According to local and international media reports, thousands of regime soldiers surrendered following battles with [anti-regime forces](#) in late 2023 and early 2024, while thousands more have [deserted or defected](#). In 2022, the Myanmar military lifted the maximum sentence for desertion from two to five years. In February 2024, the military announced it would begin enforcing conscription, and this was being implemented as at the time of publication in 2025. There have been reports of forcible recruitment, including unconfirmed reports of [underage recruitment](#) in some parts of the country (see also [Conscription and Forcible Recruitment](#)).

5.4 Myanmar military personnel generally enjoy impunity for human rights violations. There have been a few convictions for human rights violations in military courts in recent years, but these involved junior officers and resulted in short sentences. In April 2018, seven soldiers were sentenced to 10 years imprisonment with hard labour for their involvement in the Inn Din massacre in Rakhine State in 2017. They were released after less than a year. No military personnel have been held officially accountable by the regime for human rights violations committed since the February 2021 coup.

Police

5.5 The Myanmar Police Force is responsible for law enforcement outside conflict areas and within the areas under the central authorities' control, although it sometimes operates in conflict areas alongside the [military](#). Responsible to the Ministry of Interior, the Myanmar Police Force has about 100,000 personnel, divided military-style into 'commissioned' officers and frontline 'enlisted' ranks. States and divisions have their own police forces, and various departments carry out specialty functions such as Special Branch, Railways Police, and so forth. Only around 5 per cent of the Myanmar Police Force is female, which reportedly impairs its ability to respond to [GBV](#) effectively.

5.6 While 'officer' ranks have higher levels of education and are reportedly capable by regional standards, lower-ranked police in Myanmar are generally poorly trained and equipped. Record-keeping and other systems are outdated and inadequate, especially in regional and rural areas. There is no nationwide database of offenders, and in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 it would be relatively easy for an offender to move between jurisdictions to escape arrest.

5.7 Like the Myanmar [military](#), the Myanmar Police Force's public reputation and morale have been badly affected by the coup. The Myanmar Police Force is accused of widespread human rights violations, including beatings, [extrajudicial killings](#), [torture](#), sexual abuse and [arbitrary detention](#). Recruitment has fallen sharply, and thousands of police have reportedly deserted. In 2023, Myanmar Police raised the retirement age for officers in an effort to stem their losses.

5.8 Since the 2021 coup, the Myanmar Police Force has become increasingly militarised. The junta enacted the *Myanmar Police Law* (2022), which places police under direct control of the military and requires them to 'participate in matters related to security and the national defence'. In-country sources told DFAT thousands of Myanmar military soldiers had been 'turned into' police following the 2021 coup, and local police continued to be sent into frontline combat, often unwillingly.

Legal System

5.9 Civilian courts in Myanmar are organised into four levels: the Supreme Court of the Union; State and Region High Courts; District Courts and Courts of Self-Administered Divisions and Zones; and Township Courts. The 2008 Constitution provides for courts-martial (military courts) to adjudicate cases involving Myanmar [military](#) personnel independently. At the state and regional level, civil matters are often managed by the bureaucracy rather than the judiciary. Criminal cases can be tried by village magistrates or escalated to state or federal courts. Customary and traditional dispute resolution systems operate in some parts of the country for some types of crimes, such as rape. In-country sources told DFAT in 2024 [women](#) often experienced unjust outcomes under these systems.

5.10 On 15 March 2021, the military junta issued *Martial Law Order 3/2021*, allowing for the trial of civilians in specially-established military tribunals for a wide range of offences committed in parts of the country where martial law applies (11 townships in Yangon and Mandalay as at the time of publication in 2025). These tribunals are headed by a military Judge Advocate General and have the power to impose the [death penalty](#) for crimes where it might otherwise not apply. People are sometimes sentenced in absentia, including to death. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 trials held by military tribunals were summary and defendants had no right to legal representation or right of appeal besides to the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

5.11 Myanmar's judicial system is highly politicised, and judges are typically not independent or impartial, a situation that has become particularly acute since the 2021 coup. Trust in the judiciary is very low and most victims of crime do not pursue legal action. Corruption is an ongoing problem; Transparency International reported in 2020 that 27 per cent of Myanmar people who had dealt with the courts had paid bribes. Following

the 2021 coup, the junta replaced many judges with links to the NLD with judges loyal to the regime, despite these removals being contrary to the constitution.

5.12 Lawyers representing NLD members and anti-coup activists have been arbitrarily detained, and in-country sources told DFAT in 2023 lawyers who took on political cases did so at great personal risk. There are reports of regime officials and security forces threatening lawyers and judges. Soldiers have pointed guns at or fired warning shots at lawyers attempting to defend clients in court. In-country sources said at least one judge had been removed from her position after failing to hand down maximum sentences to political prisoners.

5.13 In May 2021, the junta amended the *Legal Aid Law*, greatly reducing the ability of the poor to access legal aid, removing the right to legal aid during pre-trial detention (when most abuses occur) and denying legal aid to stateless persons, asylum seekers, foreigners and migrant workers. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 detainees were often unaware what charges have been laid against them until they appeared in court.

5.14 Section 374 of the 2008 Constitution contains protections against double jeopardy and states ‘any person convicted or acquitted by a competent court for an offence shall not be retried unless a superior court annuls the judgment and orders the retrial’. A similar provision is found in Section 6 of the *Union Judiciary Law* (2010).

Detention and Prison

5.15 In 2023, the US Department of State reported there were 50 known prisons and 50 known labour camps in Myanmar. In October 2021, Associated Press reported, since the 2021 coup, the military had transformed many public facilities such as community halls into interrogation centres. These were used to house large numbers of people who were rounded up following anti-coup protests, who were then interrogated before being transferred to long-term detention facilities. Once detained, prisoners can be held on remand for weeks or months before they are put on trial or even made aware of their charges.

5.16 Pre-trial detainees are often held with convicted prisoners, and political prisoners with common prisoners. Women are generally held in separate facilities but are almost always arrested and interrogated by men. Children are considered ‘juvenile trainees’ and can be held separately, but otherwise their treatment differs little from adults. There are widespread reports of [deaths in custody](#) due to mistreatment and neglect.

5.17 Prior to 2020, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was permitted to undertake visits to detention facilities, but since the COVID-19 pandemic all outside visits have been denied on public health grounds. In 2023, in-country sources described the conditions in both prisons and labour camps as harsh and overcrowded. Prisoners have poor access to medicine and health services, and according to in-country sources, deaths have occurred in custody due to prisoners being denied access to life-saving treatment. International and local media report corruption is common in both prisons and labour camps, with inmates bribing guards to receive water, clothing and other necessities, or to be granted positions of authority to supervise other inmates.

INTERNAL RELOCATION

5.18 Article 355 of the Constitution protects the right of citizens ‘to settle and reside in any place within the Union of Myanmar according to law’. Nevertheless, people in Myanmar face a variety of restrictions to their freedom of movement. In the past, these restrictions primarily applied to areas with active conflicts (e.g. Rakhine State), but now much of Myanmar is impacted by movement restrictions of various kinds. Following the 2021 coup, authorities increased the number of security checkpoints in cities and on major roads. In

February 2021, the junta amended the Ward or Village Tract Administration Law (2012) to require people to report all overnight guests to their homes, a requirement previously removed in 2016. Failure to comply can attract a fine or imprisonment.

5.19 People attempting to relocate within Myanmar face a range of barriers depending on their personal circumstances. Some members of [minority ethnic groups](#) do not speak Burmese, which can make relocation to Burmese-speaking areas difficult. Relocation is also challenging for people without significant financial resources or existing networks of family and friends in the location they are moving to. Single [women](#) often find it particularly difficult to relocate due to a lack of economic opportunities, as well as general insecurity. Since the 2021 coup, large numbers of people have fled to areas controlled by EAOs to escape arrest for anti-regime activities including protests and participation in the CDM. This has been a factor in increased conflict between EAOs and the Myanmar military in these areas (see [Security Situation](#)). Reports emerged in August 2024 that some IDPs who have relocated to Yangon due to conflict in Northern Shan and elsewhere have struggled to secure accommodation and faced increased scrutiny from authorities.

TREATMENT OF RETURNEES

Exit and Entry Procedures

5.20 Myanmar has three international airports: in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw. After the COVID-19 pandemic, international flights were limited to just Yangon. Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw international flights have since resumed. Check-in and immigration procedures for Myanmar passport-holders are similar to standard international practices, but since the 2021 coup, travellers are scrutinised by security forces prior to leaving the country. Airport staff review booking details and check the name in the passport against the name on the reservation. Customs and immigration staff vet baggage, and immigration staff check the passport photograph matches the bearer and scan the passport.

5.21 In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 before clearing customs, departing travellers were subject to a 'military check' that compared their details against a list of people wanted by the regime. At the time of publication in 2025, DFAT was aware of people being denied permission to leave the country and taken into custody following these checks. There is reportedly a delay of up to 48 hours between someone being listed by the authorities as banned from travel and the notification of immigration officials at the airport. According to media reports, some people have been able to leave the country by paying bribes, although this was expensive and risky and would not be possible for high-profile individuals (see [Political Opinion](#)).

5.22 Travel to or from Myanmar by land is restricted to a limited number of official border crossing points in Thailand, Laos, China and India. There are also lengthy stretches of unmonitored border areas where unofficial land crossings occur. Many thousands of people have crossed these borders unofficially since the 2021 coup, mostly into Thailand, but also into India and occasionally China (see the [DFAT country information reports for Thailand, India and China](#)). Since the August 2017 violence in Rakhine State, [Rohingya](#) immigrants have undertaken irregular maritime movements from Rakhine State to Thailand and Malaysia. In May 2024, the military regime announced it was increasing scrutiny of people crossing land borders between Myanmar and China, Thailand and India, reportedly in an attempt to catch people trying to avoid conscription. This included the introduction of a new [Unique Identification \(UID\) 'smart card'](#).

5.23 DFAT assesses it would be difficult, but not impossible, for a person wanted by the authorities to safely leave the country by air, depending on their profile and [documentation](#). DFAT assesses it would be relatively easy for a person wanted by the authorities to cross undetected into neighbouring countries via land, although

they would first have to evade internal checkpoints and possibly make an arduous journey through difficult terrain.

Conditions for Returnees

5.24 Myanmar's Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population is responsible for interviewing returnees, with the exception of [Rohingya](#) returnees, who are managed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides a range of services for returnees, including assistance with quarantine requirements, legal assistance, training courses, and help to access schooling and health services. Due to geographical and capacity limitations, only about 40 to 60 per cent of returnees are able to access these services.

5.25 Following the 2021 coup, an estimated 100,000 people fled overland to Thailand from Myanmar. Of this number, about 60,000 are estimated to have returned. Before the coup, refugees from Thailand (primarily [Karen](#)) could return to Myanmar via a formal assisted voluntary returns process, undergoing 'national verification', which could take up to a year, before being issued a CSC (see [National Identity Cards](#)), which allowed them to exercise rights and access services in Myanmar. In-country sources told DFAT no one had returned from Thailand under this scheme since the 2021 coup and there was little interest in doing so.

5.26 Migrants have been returned to Myanmar since the 2021 coup, primarily from neighbouring countries, including Thailand, India and Bangladesh. Three days after the coup, Malaysia accepted an offer by the junta to return 1,086 people to Myanmar on three navy ships, despite a Malaysian court order they be allowed to remain in Malaysia. Malaysia stated all those who returned did so voluntarily and none of them were asylum seekers. DFAT understands these returnees were required to quarantine in Yangon before being returned to their communities. Returnees to Myanmar who departed the country illegally are subject to up to five years' imprisonment for having illegally crossed a border, although in-country sources told DFAT this was rarely enforced.

5.27 In November 2017, the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh signed an 'Agreement of Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State'. According to the agreement, Myanmar will receive former residents of Rakhine State who left for Bangladesh after the violent attacks of October 2016 and August 2017, if they can prove their former residency of Rakhine State. Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed to commence the repatriation of displaced [Rohingya](#) in January 2018 and to complete the process within two years. A May 2021 article in *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, a regime-controlled newspaper, reported 790 Rohingya had returned to Myanmar from Bangladesh 'on their own' since the agreement was signed. Large-scale repatriation of Rohingya from Bangladesh remains a distant prospect. See also the [DFAT Country Information Report on Bangladesh](#).

5.28 DFAT assesses, considering the high level of scrutiny of people arriving and departing Myanmar, and the severe consequences for anyone suspected of opposing or criticising the regime or having links to Western countries (see [Political Opinion](#)), a failed asylum seeker returning from Australia would be at high risk of official harassment, [arbitrary detention](#) and violence, regardless of the reason they originally left Myanmar.

DOCUMENTATION

5.29 Myanmar authorities issue a wide variety of identity and other official documents, including [birth and death certificates](#), [national identification cards](#), [household registers](#) and [passports](#). The specific documents a person holds may depend on their class of citizenship (full, naturalised or associate – see [Race/Nationality](#)), as well as their capacity to negotiate Myanmar's complicated, inefficient and often [corrupt](#) bureaucracy. Since

the 2021 coup, large numbers of people have had to flee their homes, often carrying limited documentation. [PDF](#) attacks on ward administration offices, office closures and a general reluctance to interact with representatives of the regime mean many people have been unwilling or unable to apply for new documents or renew existing ones since the 2021 coup.

Birth and Death Certificates

5.30 The *Ward or Village Tract Administration Law* (2012) requires all births and deaths to be registered with ward or village tract administrators. The punishment for non-compliance is a maximum seven days' imprisonment or MMK 5,000 (approximately AUD 5).

5.31 Birth certificates provide citizens with access to social, [education](#) and [health services](#). Citizens without birth certificates may be denied higher education and job opportunities. In 2014 and 2015, the government conducted nationwide campaigns to raise awareness about the procedures of birth registration, and in 2017, less than 20 per cent of children below the age of five were reported to be unregistered. While most children in urban areas are registered, few children in remote areas have a birth certificate. Children in Rakhine State are most likely to be unregistered, and Rohingya children in particular face difficulties in obtaining birth certificates (see [Rohingya](#)). Deaths are reportedly under-registered, particularly in rural areas with limited access to health services. See [Children and Young People](#).

National Identity Cards

5.32 Since Myanmar's independence, a variety of identity cards have been issued under different laws:

- **National Registration Card (NRC):** Often referred to as the 'three-folding card', NRCs were issued under the *Registration of Residents Act* (1949) in the period from 1949–1989. NRCs offer full access to citizenship rights and do not record ethnicity or religion. They were later replaced by CSCs which are still colloquially called 'NRCs'. In 2017, the government launched a pilot project to replace paper-based NRCs with an electronic card in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay and Yangon regions, and Rakhine State. Rohingya and Rakhine Muslims who surrendered their NRCs as part of the citizenship scrutiny process in the early 1990s did not receive CSCs in return.
- **Temporary Registration Card (TRC):** Known as the 'white card', the TRC was intended as a temporary replacement for people whose NRC was lost or damaged. However, from 1995 Myanmar authorities began issuing TRCs to Rohingya and other minorities not officially recognised by the state for birthright citizenship under the 1982 *Burma Citizenship Law*, supposedly while their citizenship status was being determined. TRCs were revoked in 2015, and replaced with a **Temporary Approval Card (TAC)** or 'white card receipt'. The TAC's legal basis is unclear, and it does not confer any citizenship rights.
- **Citizenship Scrutiny Card (CSC):** Introduced under the *Myanmar Citizenship Law* in 1982, CSCs were issued in accordance with the three categories of citizenship: full ('pink card'), associate ('green card') and naturalised ('blue card'). CSCs include ethnicity and religion information. These are still colloquially called 'NRCs'. Very few CSCs have been issued to Rohingya. See [Race/Nationality](#).
- **National Verification Card (NVC):** Previously known as Identity Cards for National Verification (ICNVs), NVCs ('turquoise card') have been issued since 2016 to people undergoing citizenship verification, but are not considered an identity document or proof of citizenship. The NVC does not include ethnicity or religion information. UNHCR has reported although many [Hindus](#) are eligible for naturalised CSCs, many remain undocumented, and those who are documented are generally required by the government to obtain an NVC. Biometric data has been collected with the issuance of NVCs since

October 2017. NVCs have been issued in Rakhine State by the Immigration and National Registration Department, accompanied by security forces. This has largely been implemented through a door-to-door process, as many Muslims remain reluctant to approach authorities directly and apply for the card. Many Rohingya continue to be unwilling to engage in the NVC process, due to a deep distrust of the government. DFAT is aware of reports of individuals who did not voluntarily participate in the process being issued NVCs (see [Rohingya](#), Citizenship).

- **Unique Identification Card (UID) aka ‘smart card’:** In May 2024, the military regime announced the introduction of a new 10-digit Unique Identification (UID) ‘smart card’. This card is required to cross land borders between Myanmar and Thailand, China and India. According to the Ministry of Immigration and Population, the new UID cards are free and applicants can file a complaint if they are charged to obtain one. However, there are widespread reports of months-long delays in issuing the cards and demands for bribes of up to AUD 200 for same-day issuance.

Household Lists

5.33 Under the *Ward or Village Tract Administration Law* (2012), Village and Ward Tract Administrators throughout Myanmar are required to compile and register births and deaths and move people on and off household lists. As such, households are required to report any changes, including relocations and marriages, to Township Administration Offices. The types of documentation and the amounts of money required for this process vary across different jurisdictions. For example, Amnesty International reported in 2017 transferring individuals from one household list to another in Rakhine State required a copy of the existing household list, a marriage certificate, a copy of their identity card, and a letter of recommendation from the ward or village authority. Households are also required to present a copy of their list to authorities upon request. Household lists are issued and updated by the Ministry of Immigration and Population and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

5.34 Household registration is required for the issuance of [identity documentation](#), [school enrolment](#) (particularly at secondary and tertiary levels), accessing services (including [health](#), electricity and water), marriage and travel permission. Since the expiration of TRCs (see [Rohingya](#), [National Identity Cards](#)) in 2015, household lists have been the only form of identification for many Rohingya.

5.35 In 2017, Amnesty International reported on cases of residents in Rakhine State absent without permission during the annual checks being removed from their household lists. Amnesty International also reported people who returned from abroad after being deleted from their household list risked arrest and conviction for immigration offences. According to in-country sources, bribes were used to prevent deletions from household lists; however, the costs were high by local standards. In central Rakhine State, some household lists have reportedly not been updated since the 2012 violence. In 2017, Amnesty International reported increased difficulties for [Rohingya](#) in adding [births](#) to household lists since 2016.

5.36 If a person is found unregistered, the penalty is a maximum of seven days’ [detention](#), during which time the person must prove they belong to a household and be registered on their household list by the head of the household. The 2018 UN Fact-Finding Mission concluded most [Rohingya](#) who departed Myanmar following security operations were unlikely to have documentation proving former residency. In February 2021, the military junta amended the *Ward or Village Tract Administration Law* (2012) to reinstate the requirement to report all overnight guests, a move criticised by Human Rights Watch as interfering with the right to privacy and enabling arbitrary arrest and detention.

Passports

5.37 Myanmar introduced machine-readable 'e-passports' in 2015. These store personal and biometric information on an embedded smart-card chip. There are 17 passport issuing centres across the country, at least one in every state and region. To obtain a passport, citizens need to present their [CSC](#), and [household registration](#), birth certificate and Smart Card (UID) and fill out an application at the issuing centre. The applicant must attend in person, where they have an official photo taken. Offices usually specify 10 to 15 working days for processing, although timeframes vary depending on the office. Bribes are reportedly often required to obtain, and expedite, passports (see [Prevalence of Fraud](#)). With a large enough bribe, it is reportedly possible to bypass many requirements for the issue or re-issue of a passport, including at overseas passport offices.

5.38 People of non-Bamar ethnicity often report racist treatment at the hands of passport officials, including being required to queue separately, being subject to additional scrutiny and being solicited for additional bribes (see [People of South Asian descent](#)). In May 2022, local media reported the regime was refusing to issue passports to [CDM participants](#) including civil servants, and that names of these participants had been circulated to passport offices. In June 2021, the junta sent notes to foreign governments including Australia announcing the cancellation of dozens of passports belonging to members of the National Unity Government and other opponents of the regime.

PREVALENCE OF FRAUD

5.39 Document fraud is highly prevalent in Myanmar. Fraud takes the form of fake [documentation](#) or genuine documentation provided on the basis of fraudulent information. The prevalence of [corruption](#) in Myanmar means fake identity documentation can be purchased with relative ease, and identity feeder documents including [birth](#), marriage and divorce certificates, [household registration lists](#), and [NRCs](#), [CSCs](#) and [NVCs](#) are all subject to significant fraud. There are also reports of young people using false birth dates on identification documents to avoid conscription. While passports have more sophisticated security features, it is possible to obtain a genuine passport using a fake national identity card.

5.40 At the time of publication in 2025, DFAT was unable to verify official punishment, if any, for those determined to have used fraudulent documents.